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H. A. J. A. R. O. S. C.

*Taken, by permission, from the Original Bronze Medal
in the Royal Gallery of the Uffizi in Florence.*

THE HISTORY
OF
GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA
AND OF HIS TIMES.

BY PASQUALE VILLARI,

Professor of History in the University of Pisa.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY

LEONARD HORNER, F.R.S.

WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF THE AUTHOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.

1863.

TO THE MARCHESE GINO CAPPONI,

A NAME ILLUSTRIOUS FOR CENTURIES IN THE ANNALS
OF FLORENCE, AND NOBLY UPHELD BY HIM IN THE
PRESENT DAY,

THIS TRANSLATION OF A WORK HE HIGHLY VALUES, INTO A
LANGUAGE WITH WHICH HE IS FAMILIAR, IS INSCRIBED, WITH
THE GREATEST RESPECT AND WARMEST REGARD, BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

SOON after the commencement of a late residence in Florence, being on the battle-field where the heroic Savonarola so valiantly fought, and was so cruelly slain, I was desirous to read his history in his contemporary biographies. I mentioned to my venerable and learned friend, the Marchese Gino Capponi, that I was reading the *Life of the Friar* by Burlamacchi; upon which he observed — ‘You must read Villari, a recent work, by an able man, the result of ten years’ research into original documents, many of which he discovered; it is the first and the only work in which full justice has been done to Savonarola.’

I procured the volumes, and was so much interested by them, particularly by the new light thrown upon the character of the Friar as a philosopher and politician, that I considered it desirable that an edition of the work should be prepared for my countrymen who do not read Italian. I had soon the pleasure of becoming acquainted with the author, to whom I mentioned what had occurred to me, and I learned from him that the ground was not pre-occupied. Finding that he spoke English with fluency, I requested his cooperation in my proposed undertaking; that he would revise my translation, so that I might feel secure that I had always rightly

understood his meaning, especially in idiomatic expressions. He, kindly, complying with my request, I set to work, and I was soon rewarded by an increasing intimacy with the accomplished author.

The translation has been printed since my return to England; each proof sheet has been sent to the author, and returned with his approval or suggested amendments.

I have considered it advisable to retain, in most cases, the Italian Christian names of persons, and designations of public institutions, but have added an explanatory index of the latter. With the approbation of the author, I have given a selection only of the numerous documents appended to his second volume, such as will be interesting to the general reader. The documents, so liberally supplied by the author, are given as verifications of his statements in the text; and persons who are disposed to criticize the work by an examination of these documents, will naturally prefer to consult them in the original language. I have added a few illustrations from other sources.

L. H.

60 MONTAGU SQUARE:
January 1863.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE fame of Father Girolamo Savonarola, which, during his lifetime, excited general wonder, and to which the attention of our greatest writers was long directed, became, in the eighteenth century, if not utterly forgotten, a subject only of derision. It was the common fate of religious men in that age, and of every religious subject. When Bayle, in his Dictionary, with a cold and cynical spirit, directed his sharp and bitter sarcasms against the poor Monk, calling him a low ridiculous impostor, who had well deserved the martyrdom he underwent, his opinion was almost universally adopted.

Not long after, an anonymous writer published, at Geneva, a biography of Savonarola, in Italian.* He professed, in substance, the same opinions as those of Bayle, but what the latter had uttered only in scorn, proceeded in this author from anger and spite: the venomous sarcasms which dropped from the pen of the cold sceptic Bayle, were aimed by the anonymous writer with a fury and a zeal that betrayed a brother monk: he was, in fact, the Jesuit Rastrelli. But the rancour was so

* Vita del Padre Girolamo Savonarola, Ginevra, 1781.

evident that it destroyed all confidence in the book, notwithstanding a certain amount of merit, from useful researches, and from being written with a free, though unchastened, vivacity, not uncommon in our writers of the last century.

A year after this work, a new "History of Savonarola" * was published at Leghorn, also without the name of the author. It was written by Barsanti, a Dominican Friar, who, replying to the anonymous Jesuit, took up the defence of his brother monk with great warmth. Barsanti appears to have been, in that age, the only person who read and admired the sermons of Savonarola: he had studied the old biographies, as well as a valuable manuscript, lost sight of after his time, the Diaries (*Giornate*) of Lorenzo Violi. He had been a diligent, minute, and patient collector of all notices relating to his subject, which, if it did not excite any sympathy among his contemporaries, was at least a solace to his own heart. He did not allow himself to be carried away by the current of the day, and produced a book which might have been written centuries before, but which did little more than swell the number of the older biographies. The spirit of the old chroniclers seemed to be revived in him, but without the simplicity and ingenuous vigour of their style: we find in his work the same warmth of feeling, the same mistakes, and the same fanaticism, but we miss that genuine originality, which, in them, reflects so vividly

* *Della Storia del P. Girolamo Savonarola*, libri quattro, dedicati a S. A. Pietro Leopoldo. Livorno, 1782.

the colours of their day. The book was so crammed with quotations, and refutations of the assertions of Rastrelli, as to become wearisome to the reader; and little calculated to awaken any desire to become acquainted with Savonarola. A silence of nearly half a century succeeded this work, during which time the name of Savonarola appears to have been utterly forgotten.

The nineteenth century inaugurated a different order of things, and gave a new direction to studies. The Middle Age, so much contemned in the time of Voltaire, received again due honour; researches in religion were no longer held unworthy to engage the attention of earnest men, and it became possible, at last, to praise a monk without exciting general derision. Germany devoted her energies to this new course of study with an almost feverish ardour, and to that country belongs the honour of having, for the first time, directed attention to the character and doctrines of Savonarola.

In 1835, Rudelbach* published a biography, in which he did not dwell much upon the character of Savonarola, as he had not any new fact to bring forward, and was not able to present those facts already known, in a new point of view: an exposition of the doctrines being the chief object of his work. He was, however, undoubtedly the first who after reading the works of Savonarola, had extracted from them a body of theological doctrine.

* *Hieronymus Savonarola und seine Zeit. Aus den Quellen dargestellt*, Von A. G. Rudelbach, Hamburg, 1835. We may observe that the reader will perhaps find some of these notices repeated. We have thought it necessary to collect together in the Preface whatever it is most important to be made acquainted with, which has reference to the biography.

Notwithstanding the many severe judgements passed on the works, he was the first who had the courage to affirm, before modern Europe, that they deserved the attention of the learned, and that their author had possessed a profoundly speculative genius. All this he declared with the sincere enthusiasm of one who is convinced that he is announcing a truth hitherto unknown. His work met with great success in Germany; which, perhaps, was less to be ascribed to the value of his work than to the object he had in view: namely, to show that Savonarola had led the way to the Reformation. Luther himself had canonized the Monk of St. Mark as a martyr of Protestantism; but, in the eighteenth century, such ideas had been forgotten; and consequently they came forth with new life in the work of Rudelbach, who rested and sustained his opinion upon an accurate examination of all the writings of Savonarola. Hence the great applause with which the work was hailed in Germany and England; and, from that day to the present, the sympathies of Anglo-German writers have ever been secured to Savonarola.

If, however, we examine this work of Rudelbach impartially, we soon discover some very grave errors. Setting aside what is properly the history of the man, for on that we learn nothing new, the author's examination of the doctrines of Savonarola contains not a few imperfections. When hard pressed, he places his subject on the bed of Procrustes, from which it is often raised so altered and deformed as would lead us to doubt his good faith, did we not know the extent to which a man may be blinded by party spirit. Thus, when Rudelbach happens to come

upon some writings which manifestly contradict all his ideas, he quietly passes them over. An instance of this may be seen in his minute analysis of the *Triumph of the Cross*. The first three books of that work, which, for many years, was a text-book in the schools of the *Propaganda*, treat of that part of the Christian doctrine in which Catholics and Protestants are nearly agreed; and here Rudelbach shows himself a diligent expositor, endeavouring only to find in them some recondite Protestant sense. But when he comes to the fourth book, in which Savonarola speaks of the Sacraments, and where the amount of evidence leaves no doubt respecting his Catholicism, then the German biographer gives up the pursuit, and turns to something else. Many instances of this occur.

That part of the work in which the author treats of what he calls the *prophetical character* of Savonarola is somewhat remarkable. The subject was new, important, and for the first time considered in a serious manner. But Rudelbach, instead of diligently collecting new facts, or impartially estimating the value of those already existing, sets to work to explain some theories founded wholly on his own imagination. He defines, in the first place, what we are to understand by *evangelical prophesying*, and then brings up a long array of prophets of the Reformation, among whom he places the Abate Joachim, St. Bridget, and Savonarola. This surely is neither history nor criticism, but wandering in the field of imagination, endeavouring to find support to a foregone conclusion.

A second German biography appeared in Berlin in

argument which almost amounts to superstition ; nor could he have forgotten those in which he openly inculcates upon the faithful the duty of praying for the dead.

There is another grave error in the work of Meier which we feel bound to notice. While he proceeds, step by step, to explain all those parts of the Friar's doctrines which are merely copied from St. Thomas Aquinas and the Scholastics, all that which properly belongs to Savonarola, and which demonstrates his truly original genius, continually escapes his notice. He dwells, every now and then, upon those passages which appear to him to contain the germs of the Reformation, but he shows himself so little convinced of his own theory, that he leaves the reader far from being persuaded of its accuracy. Again, when he treats of the prophecies, it is very difficult to comprehend his meaning. His object is to condemn the judgement of Rudelbach ; he wishes to prove, that if Savonarola was not a prophet, that he did not believe himself to be one, nor did he desire to be so considered by others. But yet he has not courage enough to maintain that belief, which he finds manifestly contradicted by facts, and, as often is the case, he remains vague, uncertain, and confused.

Comparing the two German biographies, we find ourselves constrained to admit, that the somewhat fantastical dissertation of Rudelbach, though abounding with errors, gives us a picture of what we may term the wild originality of Savonarola more faithfully than Meier with all his researches, and all his documents, and his assumption of accuracy. In judging of Rudel-

bach, we may perhaps be too ready to excuse his blunders; in the case of Meier, we may unjustly overlook his merits; but, upon the whole, public opinion has been somewhat more just than we should have anticipated.

These two works, supported as they are by the authority of Luther, have given currency to the idea that Savonarola was really a precursor of the Reformers, and by thus increasing the sympathies of England and Northern Germany, the attention of Europe was re-awakened to the history of the man. There then issued an eloquent voice from the Convent of St. Mark, in Florence, eager to vindicate the Catholicism and the spirit of liberty in Savonarola—that of Father Vincent Marchese, of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans), known to all Italy by his history of the Dominican painters. An elegant writer, a sincere Catholic, possessing a mind deeply imbued with sentiments of truth and liberty, he became an impassioned admirer of Savonarola. With a degree of love and veneration, which almost approaches that of a worshipper, he collected the scattered fragments relating to the Friar which existed in his convent; he ransacked the libraries and archives in Florence; and from time to time published the results of his researches in the *Archivio Storico di Firenze*, consisting of unpublished letters of Savonarola and other writings relating to his life. These documents, it is true, were not often of much importance, but by the acuteness and earnestness applied to their examination, he was able to produce from them matter of some value to history. The name of

the author, and the importance of his subject, created much sympathy in his labours; and, encouraged by this public support, he brought out his *History of the Convent of St. Mark*.* The principal and most remarkable part of the whole work consists of what is almost a biography of the Friar. The author represents him as a moral, political, and religious reformer, describes his life and habits, and comments upon his writings and public preachings. Confining himself to those parts of the history which previous biographers had only slightly touched upon, he makes us acquainted with the intense love of liberty that existed in Savonarola, which was the true origin of the persecution he underwent, and was the cause of his being put to death. The admiration existing in the convent for their ancient martyr inspired Father Marchese with an eloquence, which gives a colour of truth and reality to his work, entirely wanting in the German biographies. It met with the applause it deserved, and the attention of Italians was awakened to an intense ardour and enthusiasm for the republican Monk, who with so much courage had given battle to the Borgias and the Medici; whose aim had been to tighten the ancient connubial bands of liberty and religion, restoring both to their true principles, and which were those by which he had been sustained in his martyrdom when dying for God and his country.†

* *Storia di S. Marco del P. Vincenzo Marchese dei Predicatori*, published for the first time in his *San Marco illustrato*; and afterwards included in his *Scritti Varii*, Florence, 1855 — Le Monnier.

† 'The history of no man abounds more in sorrows, in hopes, in the untravellings of deception, in useful instruction; so that in reading the life of

The work of Father Marchese, although calculated to awaken, did not entirely satisfy public curiosity. He had not undertaken that diligent research so indispensable for those who desire to write a true biography; he was acquainted with parts only of his hero's works and discourses, and although capable of writing an eloquent chapter in the history of his convent, he could not give a full account of Savonarola; for the nature of his work did not admit of it. Moreover, it must be confessed that he was too ardent an admirer to be a thoroughly impartial historian. New enquiries and a renewed investigation had thus become necessary. A biography of Savonarola appeared in France, in 1853, in two large volumes.* The author of it, M. Perrens, had made researches in Florence, and had obtained from the Abbé Bernardi, of Piedmont, a copy of many documents from the Marcian Library in Venice, several

Savonarola, during the brief period of the last eight years of his residence in Florence, we seem to run through the history of a whole people and of an entire age; to witness the melancholy transition of a nation from generous loyalty to the corruption of modern times, and the developement of a drama the most important, the most touching, the most sorrowful that is to be found in the history of Italy for many centuries.'—*Padre Marchese, Scritti Varii*, p. 103.

These are the words of a living and earnest Catholic priest. A no less earnest Protestant, the late Reverend Frederic Myers, introduces his lecture on Savonarola with the following sentence: 'On resuming my Lecture on Great Men I commence with the life of a Religious Reformer. And I do so, not only because this is a character which it is most congenial with my own taste to speak of, but because I do deliberately judge it to be one of the very highest with which history is conversant, and one which it is especially profitable for us all very frequently to contemplate.'—*Lectures on Great Men*, 5th Ed. London, 1861.—TR.

* *Jérôme Savonarole, sa vie, ses prédications, ses écrits*. Par F. T. Perrens, Paris, 1853.

of which, although known in Germany by the work of Meier, were quite unknown in Italy and France. With the help of such valuable materials, M. Perrens published a work which, although written in some parts with too much haste, was nevertheless by far the most complete account of Savonarola then existing, and consequently it met with very great and not undeserved applause.

The first volume, containing a narrative of facts, we read with much interest : the author is not eloquent, but we have before us, for the first time, a clear, well-arranged, and full account of all the events in the life of Savonarola. The unsettled and troubled drama of that life has a fascination and an eloquence peculiar to it, which keeps the attention of the reader constantly awake, and would have compensated, to a great extent, for the defects of the author, but for one grave error, which damages the work in its very essence. M. Perrens fails to convince us that he himself had a clear idea of the subject on which he wrote ; he gives no definite opinion respecting the person he wishes to describe ; and this defect creates a painful uncertainty in the mind of the reader, which indeed the author seems almost purposely to wish to increase. When we are disposed to admire the courage of Savonarola, he reminds us that the Friar had at some other time shown himself too timid ; and just as our enthusiasm is awakened for the courage he displayed in his contests with the Medici, he is held up to us with the stain of a flatterer. It appears as if M. Perrens feared to pronounce a frank and decided judgement upon his hero,

for no sooner does an opinion involuntarily drop from his pen than he hastens to correct it ; and, in the last and most solemn hours of the life of Savonarola, he abandons and condemns the unhappy Friar, not only without being able to bring forward documents to justify such a condemnation, but without even a thorough examination of those already produced. Thus the mind of the reader is left in a state of discomfort and confusion, not knowing which to denounce most severely, Savonarola or his biographer.

A somewhat serious error occurs also in the second volume, where he treats of the writings of Savonarola, giving either only an epitome of them, or sometimes an extract, but in neither case accompanied by any criticism or opinion. The author frequently declares himself to be incapable of passing judgement upon religious doctrines, but he falls into errors which even his modesty is not sufficient to excuse. After having invariably represented Savonarola as a sincere Catholic, he refers to an authority which he pronounces to be far more trustworthy than himself, giving in his appendix a long chapter from Rudelbach, in which the German biographer does his utmost to prove Savonarola to be a precursor of Luther : and thus M. Perrens destroys his own work. It is true that this chapter was translated for him, and we may therefore suppose that want of time had prevented him from reading it himself, but can we excuse such a degree of negligence in an author, so earnest as he undoubtedly is ? After all, however, his book was at the time the most

complete that Italy had access to, for which reason the author certainly deserves our thanks.

Other works had come out and were continually appearing, but all of them of minor importance. M. Rio, in France, in his *Art Chrétien* (Paris, 1836), had written some very interesting pages upon Savonarola, and in Germany, Herr Hase* published a short popular essay, and Lenau † a poem, showing the author to possess a very lively imagination. In England, several biographies have appeared, but all of them mere compilations, written without any knowledge of the facts, and uniformly with one object in view, namely, to place the Friar of St. Mark among the Martyrs of the Reformation. The last English work, published in 1853, in two thick volumes, has, however, some merit; besides which, Mr. Madden, ‡ the author, professes moderate Catholic opinions, but he shows too great an eagerness to find all his own convictions in Savonarola; and, although he assures us that he has studied the subject with much diligence, he shows so little knowledge of times or places, that his book is full of mistakes. To mention one among many, he tells us that the activity of Savonarola was so great and unwearying that, in one day, after preaching in Santa Maria del Fiore (the Cathedral), he went to preach in the

* *Neue Propheten, drei historisch-politische Kirchenbilder*, von D. Karl Hase, Leipzig, 1851. These are three memoirs—on Joan of Arc, Savonarola, and the Anabaptists.

† *Savonarola, ein Gedicht* von Nicolaus Lenau, vierte Auflage, Stuttgart und Tübingen, 1853.

‡ *The Life and Martyrdom of Girolamo Savonarola, illustrative of the History of Church and State Connexion*, by R. R. Madden, London, 1854.

Duomo (another name for the same Church). To Italians, this book is wholly useless ; and to foreigners, it conveys the most incorrect ideas. The English have, in truth, published no work relating to Savonarola at all worthy of a nation so eminently distinguished for writers of history.

Having been for many years engaged in studying the biography of this remarkable man, we have not allowed ourselves to be discouraged from the task by the works which had already appeared ; on the contrary, they have, more than anything else, served to stimulate us to try to produce something better ; bearing in mind, however, the duty it imposed upon us, to spare neither diligence nor labour. The rule we laid down for the accomplishment of our purpose was—to read all the modern works, but to admit none as authorities unless founded on the statements of contemporaneous writers, or the works of Savonarola himself, or on original documents, carefully reading and collating them ; having had much experience of the incorrectness of quotations in other works.

Besides the modern biographies, the earlier ones had to be examined, among which those that stand first in importance are the lives by Father Pacifico Burlamacchi and Count Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola. Burlamacchi, of an illustrious family of Lucca, had been one of the most constant hearers of Savonarola's lectures and sermons, by which he finally was so thoroughly imbued with his doctrines as to assume the Dominican gown. He became a member of the Convent of San Romano, in Lucca, in

1499, that is, the year after the martyrdom of the Friar, when he commenced writing his life; not certainly displaying historical skill, but, nevertheless, with much of the vivacity of an ingenuous chronicler. He had had much personal intercourse with Savonarola, and was acquainted with his most intimate friends; he had talked with those who had been present on the most important occasions of his life, on many of which he had himself been an eye witness. He wrote with affection, with diligence, and with the utmost conscientiousness; he was a man of great purity of life, and died in 1519, with a reputation for sanctity. His work remained long in manuscript and unknown: it began to be circulated in the convents and led the way to an infinite number of biographies, written by fanatical devotees, none of which, however, were of much importance. Lastly, in 1729, Mansi, in his *Addizioni alle Miscellanee del Baluzio*,* published the work of Burlamacchi, adding to it a long description of strange miracles of Savonarola, described by Padre Timoteo Bottonio, to whose statements we can give no credit.

Count Giovan Francesco Pico della Mirandola, the nephew of the celebrated Giovanni Pico, had also been personally acquainted with Savonarola; and from an acquaintance had soon become a zealous admirer. He lived in Florence during the most agitated period of the life he proposed to write, had been present at the martyrdom of his hero, and preserved relics of him with

* It was afterwards printed separately: *Vita del P. F. Girolamo Savonarola*, scritta dal P. F. Pacifico Burlamacchi, lucchese. Lucca, 1764.

devotion. A philosopher and an elegant Latin writer, he was one of the most learned and uncorrupted men of his time, and had collected many notices with incredible diligence. He wrote and re-wrote his work many times, and under different forms; he submitted it for revision to many who had been the friends of Savonarola, and at length published it in 1530.*

These two biographies are so much alike as to create a doubt whether Pico had not taken that of Burlamacchi as a model. But the statements of contemporary authors† assure us that there is every probability that Pico was ignorant of the biography by Burlamacchi, which, as we have already said, remained long unknown. The more we look into these two authors, the greater is the confidence we place in them, and we become persuaded that their statements are worthy of confidence, notwithstanding the tone, not a little fanatical and superstitious, in which they are written.

It would be useless labour to notice all the unpublished biographies from which we have derived assistance; but we must specially mention those of the Fathers Marco della Casa‡ and Placido Cinnozzi,§ and a third by an anonymous author in the Magliabecchian

* *Vita R. P. Fr. Hieronymi Savonarolæ*, auctore Ill. D. Joan. Franc. Pico. Parisiis, 1674. This edition, brought out by Quetif, is in three vols. The two last and one half of the first, contain annotations by Quetif himself, besides several documents and letters of Savonarola.

† Father Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*, lib. ii. and the anonymous biography in the Magliabecchian Library, in Florence, among the MSS. of the Convent, i. vii., 28.

‡ In the Convent of St. Mark, Florence.

§ In the Riccardian Library, Florence.

Library, which is somewhat important. They are all the productions of contemporary brother monks of Savonarola. Still better known is the biography of Father Serafino Razzi, likewise a monk of St. Mark. It is, in fact, a compilation from Pico and Burlamacchi, and although not a contemporary, and not very acute in making new enquiries, he had an opportunity of conversing with some of the old Florentines who had known the eminent Friar, and among them the octogenarian Lorenzo Violi, whose Diaries (*Giornate*) he had read in manuscript, and of which he had made an abridgement; he had also collected and transcribed a very large number of Apologies and other works relating to the life and writings of Savonarola.*

After thus studying the biographies, we undertook a search for new documents, and chiefly those relating to the trial, which had always awakened much curiosity. The trial which was printed is generally known; but Savonarola was subjected to three examinations, and we were successful in finding the records of the two last. We were equally fortunate in finding those of the companions of his martyrdom, the Friars Salvestro and Domenico; but these last were of very little use, for they had in many places been falsified by the public notary of the Government. The autograph examinations of many other persons who were implicated in the proceedings against Savonarola were found in a deed discovered, for the first time, by Meier, but which he appears not to have examined with care. We

* The works of Razzi exist in manuscript, in the Magliabechian and Riccardian libraries.

found them of great use, from the light they threw on the last days of Savonarola; like many other documents discovered, but not thoroughly examined, by Meier.

In our further researches we came upon the unsatisfied examination of Domenico in his own hand-writing. With regard to those of Savonarola himself, we became persuaded that there was no hope of similar success, for he was not allowed, as Domenico was, to make his confessions in writing; his answers were taken down by the notary, and upon these the so-called trial proceeded. There was thus no ground for hoping to find any other more in accordance with truth, and even these documents have disappeared; however, we met with the manuscripts of two writers who had seen them, and had compared them with the printed copy, and had pointed out their chief differences.*

One of the two last-mentioned manuscripts is the

* The interest which those researches excited was so great, and the time we required to complete our task was so long, that it was impossible to prevent other publications of the documents which we had found, and about which we assuredly had no wish to make any mystery. We cannot, on this account, give, as *unpublished*, all the documents relating to the trial which we discovered in Florence; neither could we avoid inserting them in the Appendix, because the publications referred to were those of persons who had not made a special study of their subject, and therefore they came out in an imperfect form. This was the case in the publication of an apocryphal trial of Savonarola, by the distinguished Professor Paolo Emiliani Giudici in the Appendix to his *Storia dei Municipii Italiani*. The erudite compilers of the *Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani* were more careful in their publication of documents, part of which were those we had found, and part of those we had met with when guided by some indications of their existence by Meier. But even that publication came out in an incomplete and incorrect form, as we have had occasion to notice in our Appendix.

third part of the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Father Benedetto, a disciple and an intimate friend of Savonarola. We shall elsewhere speak of this work and its author: for the present, it is sufficient to say that this third part relates entirely to the so-called trial, and was before quite unknown. The other manuscript referred to is that of the *Apologia* or *Le Giornate* (Diaries) of Lorenzo Violi, which for a long time were supposed to have been lost. Violi had taken down the discourses of Savonarola as he heard them spoken; he records, besides, all that he had either seen or heard of the Friar's life, nor did he relinquish the task until he was eighty years of age, when, having lost his sight, he was obliged to lay it aside. With those documents we had obtained everything that could be desired, including all the most minute particulars relative to the trial; and they included the story of the Ordeal by Fire, about which we had so long been kept in the dark; and that which had been so long a subject of controversy was, at length, placed in its true light.

So soon as we had thus, with certainty and precision, made ourselves acquainted with the most important facts of his life, we set to work to study minutely the writings of Savonarola. It was then that we became truly surprised at the incredible negligence of his biographers; so much so that we felt persuaded that they could not have read the works they were continually quoting. How, otherwise, is it possible to account for the ignorance displayed in almost all the notices we find of them? How, otherwise, is it possible to explain their imperfect acquaintance with the religious doctrines of Savonarola,

and their entire ignorance of his philosophical system? They had before them a profound thinker, and yet they never discover him; they dwell upon a writing that possesses no value, and they pass unobserved that which displays the clear originality of its author's mind. They eagerly enquire what were his thoughts when he was in prison, what was the state of his mind, and they scarcely refer to that which he wrote in that same prison. We therefore resolved not to allow a single line of Savonarola's to pass unexamined, and we devoted several years of patient study to this arduous undertaking, without which it would have been impossible for us to write an authentic biography.*

Not satisfied with his printed works, we were desirous to examine any letters or unpublished writings of Savonarola, and we were successful in finding several. We were anxious to take him, as it were, by surprise, in the margins of his own copies of the Bible, which are covered with numerous autograph notes, in a handwriting so microscopical that they are almost

* It is our duty to state, that if we have been able to complete this examination with due accuracy, we are indebted greatly to the courtesy of Count Carlo Capponi. He is in possession of a collection of the larger and minor works, and of letters of Savonarola, and of everything else bearing upon his life, so complete, and in such perfect order, that we do not believe there exists any private collection comparable to it, either in Italy or elsewhere. He placed this collection of manuscripts entirely at our disposal, as well as the printed books in his library, with so much kindness, that we feel ourselves bound thus publicly to tender him our grateful thanks. We bear a similar testimony to many others who were bountiful in their favours; but we cannot omit to name Father Marchese, who never ceased to encourage us with an affection truly paternal. Signor Danzi, too, of Milan, although we were personally unknown to him, gave us assistance like a brother.

impossible to decipher. We were, perhaps, the first who had ever examined them, and we can now affirm with certainty, that Savonarola was ever true to himself; that in the solitude of his cell, in his most private manuscripts, he repeats the same things that he had said in the pulpit, in the presence of the whole congregation. His letters are especially calculated to place in its true light his disputes with Rome, further illustrated by some briefs of Borgia which have hitherto been unknown.

A new examination of the political life of the Friar and of the different changes which the republic underwent in his day was still wanting. To this end, neither the splendid narratives of Nardi, of Machiavelli, nor of Guicciardini, were sufficient, nor the recent researches of Meier and Marchese. With the help of the decrees (*Provvisioni*), or, as they may be termed, the laws, of the republic, we were enabled to make out a faithful representation of its constitution; and by means of the deliberations (*Pratiche*), or, as they may be called, the drafts of the discourses delivered in the Council, we obtain a near view of the passions of the men who gave a new form and a new life to the Republic. We are not aware whether any modern writer has made much account of those Florentine *Pratiche*, but this we know, that there lies buried in them a rich and unexplored mine of knowledge, and of the ancient wisdom and eloquence possessed by the Italians in civil affairs. Finally, when we place those documents side by side with the discourses of Savonarola, we cannot fail to discover to what an extent the Monk of San Marco had been the animating spirit in the great political drama before us.

It will thus be easy to understand how impossible it was for us in this biography to separate a narrative of the facts of his life from an examination of his writings, and why we have been obliged to employ so often the very words of their author. The books, the maxims, the discourses, of Savonarola cannot be judged solely from a literary point of view; they were for him the only means of effecting his purposes; they were the instruments by which he was to assist in the reconstitution of the Republic, by which he was to prepare the moral and religious regeneration of a whole people; consequently, they are inseparable from all his actions, and often constitute, by themselves, the most important facts in his life. Besides all this, we find, in the eighteen or twenty volumes of his sermons and ascetic works, flashes of the highest genius and coruscations of marvellous eloquence, frequently darting from out a forest of scholastic conceits: thus, without the painful labour of a biographer, breaking up, as it were, unreclaimed land, there was danger that the genius of Savonarola would continue to a great extent unknown.

We shall not speak of other chroniclers or manuscripts which we have collated or read; whether unpublished correspondence of private individuals, secret letters of the spies of Italian governments, a vast number of religious and political minor works, unpublished or in print, or popular poetry; nothing, in short, was passed over, in any degree calculated to enable us to give a more faithful portraiture of the man, or of the political and religious passions of the time.

And now, before concluding this Preface, already too long, let us assure our readers that we began and continued our work, throughout all our researches, and all our examinations of documents, without any preconceived ideas. We undertook the task because it appeared to us that Savonarola had played a great part, and unacknowledged, in that century which concluded the Middle Ages, and was the dawn of modern civilization; but it never entered into our mind that the Monk of the fifteenth century should be held up as a defender of the ideas and passions of the nineteenth. We have not written his history to support any political party, nor to attack or to defend Rome. If he had proved to be a heretic or an infidel, we should undoubtedly have represented him as such; he, on the contrary, has been proved to have been essentially Catholic, and in that light we have portrayed him. A system which would render history the tool of a party, or of any cause, be it ever so pure and generous, has ever appeared to us false. He who undertakes to narrate past events, enters upon a sacred territory that must be inviolable. He is not called upon to step forth as the defender of liberty and of virtue; it is his duty to act under the conviction that the history of the human race is, in itself, a living drama, which leads man to liberty, elevating him in morals, and advancing him in civilization. Whoever, therefore, would venture to disturb its course, however slightly, takes upon himself to correct the ways of Providence, and destroy their sublime harmony.

Under the guidance of these principles we have

written the *History of Girolamo Savonarola and his Times*. If we have succeeded in showing that his name is one of the most illustrious in the ranks of the generous-minded, the heroes and the martyrs of Italy, we shall have accomplished the object we had at heart, and all our labours will have been amply rewarded.

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LIFE AND TIMES OF SAVONAROLA

VOL. I.

B

BOOK FIRST.

[1452--1494.]

CHAPTER I.

FROM THE
BIRTH OF SAVONAROLA TO HIS ENTERING A CONVENT.

[1452--1475.]

THE family of SAVONAROLA traced its remote origin to the city of Padua. In the beginning of the fifteenth century they removed to the city of Ferrara, having been invited to settle there by the Marquis of Este, the sovereign of that State. Nicholas III., an amateur of literature and art, a Mæcenas to the learned, and proud of having his court distinguished by the presence of men of renowned genius, was desirous that Michael Savonarola should be near his person. He was a physician who at that time had a high reputation in the school of Padua, and his name has been transmitted to posterity not only by his many and valuable writings,* but also by the warmth of his affection for his grandson Girolamo, destined to obtain a world-wide reputation.

* *Practica de ægreditudinibus; De pulsibus; Canonica de Febribus.* He wrote also a treatise on Hygiene. *Trattato utilissimo di molte regole per conservare la sanità, dichiarando qual cose sieno utile da mangiare e quali triste.* In Vinegia, 1554.

Arrived at Ferrara, Michael was much considered at court, he obtained all sorts of favours and honours, and lived in easy circumstances and in great repute. We know little respecting his son Nicholas; he appears to have been much given to scholastic studies, but no writing by him has handed down his name: he passed his time in frequenting the court, where he wasted the patrimony which his father had amassed with much care and persevering industry. His wife, Helen, descended from the illustrious family of the Buonaccorsi of Mantua, appears to have been a woman of an elevated nature, possessing great force of character, with an almost masculine strength of mind. Chroniclers do not tell us much respecting her, but all they do say give proofs of her eminent qualities.* And, in truth, the letters addressed to her by her son Girolamo, who seems to have turned to her in all his dangers and in all his sorrows, as to the sole intimate confidant of his life, while they confirm what is said of her virtues, suggest the often repeated observation, that one of the most constant and unalterable sentiments in great minds is this love, we may almost say devotion, to their mother.

Girolamo Savonarola, whose life we propose to write, was born on the 21st of September in the year 1452, and was the third of seven children born to Nicholas

* See Father Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, MS. Bibl. Magliab. cl. xxxiv, cod. 7, at the beginning. Of this friend and disciple of Savonarola, we shall elsewhere have occasion to speak. The *Vulnera Diligentis*¹ is a small work in which he takes up the defence of the life of his master, and gives many precious particulars respecting it.

¹ Padre Marchese, in the advertisement to his copy of the *Cedrus Libani* of Fra Benedetto in the *Archivio Italiano*, vol. vii., says that the title of Benedetto's work, '*Vulnera Diligentis*,' &c., is taken from the 27th chapter of the Book of Proverbs: '*Vulnera diligentis meliora sunt quam fraudulenta odientis oscula.*' English translation: *Verse 6* — Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.'—TRANS.

and Helen.* His biographers relate marvels respecting him from his earliest years, but we all know how little faith is to be placed in such tales. We can readily believe that he had none of those attractions which lead people to be fond of children; for he was neither good-looking nor lively, but ever of a serious and quiet disposition: no one probably imagined the future which fate had in store for him. Nevertheless, as the first born had taken to the profession of arms, and the second had devoted himself to the management of his father's property, and as in all likelihood not much was to be expected from him, Girolamo was scarcely out of his childhood when the whole hopes of the family were centred in him; their dream was, that he should one day be a great physician. That seemed to them the only noble and dignified profession, as the house of Savonarola had been founded upon it. The grandfather Michael bestowed the most affectionate care on the young Girolamo. With a patience and ingenuous simplicity derived from age and extensive experience, with the clearness and precision of a strong mind, trained in the study of the natural sciences, he undertook the developement of that young intellect in the tender bud of its first thoughts, its first ideas. Most assuredly no one could be reared in a better school; by his love of books and a studious habit, the pupil soon

* The sons were, Ognibene, who became a soldier; Bartolommeo, with whose profession we are unacquainted; Girolamo; Marco, who, under the name of Fra Maurelio (Marcus Aurelius), was invested by his brother with the Dominican dress in the Convent of St. Mark, in Florence; and Alberto, who became eminent as a physician. The daughters were Beatrice, who continued to live under the paternal roof; and Clara, who was married, but, on losing her husband, came back to live with her mother and brother Albert. See Burlamacchi, *Vita del Sav.*, Lucca, 1764, p. 3. This writer was a monk of the Convent of St. Mark in Florence, and knew Savonarola. See also, Gio. Franc. Pico della Mirandola, who was also the author of a Life of Savonarola, and was moreover his friend and admirer. These two biographies are the chief sources of all the particulars relating to the friar which are known.

responded to the patient and tender care of his grandfather, and almost before it was possible that he could have fully understood the books he read, he was searching them to find hidden treasures.

Unfortunately the grandfather died early (1462),* and there remained for the boy no other guide than his father, who undertook to instruct him in philosophy. The natural sciences were held to be only a part of the philosophy with which the study of medicine then always began, and the philosophy of that day, as every-one knows, was the scholastic. It is true that in some parts of Italy the early dawn of the Platonic philosophy had begun to appear, as well as some faithful translations of Aristotle from the original Greek; but these were looked upon only as an interesting novelty: the books that were put into the hands of the young Savonarola were those of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Arabic commentaries on Aristotle. They were given to him as necessary guides and introductions to the study of medicine; and it was remarkable that so young a person should launch himself into that sea, or rather whirlpool, of confused syllogisms, and revel in them until he became at length a valiant disputant.† The works of St. Thomas attracted him with a degree of force almost incredible; he used to dwell upon them in a state of ecstasy, and meditate whole days upon them, so that it was with difficulty that he could be separated from them to be brought back to studies more necessary for medical instruction. He was thus carried along by the impulses of his own nature in one direction, and urged by his parents to another; so that already that inward struggle had imperceptibly begun, which, a little later, was to determine his future destiny, and dis-

* The precise year is uncertain. Fossi (*Catalogo*) says: 'His death seems to have occurred about the end of the year 1461, or later.'

† Jo. Franc. Pici, *Vita*, &c.; Parisiis, 1674, p. 9.

appoint the hopes of his family. Devoted to the cause of truth, as yet unconscious of his own state of being, and in that kind of happy intoxication which steals over youth when, on all sides, he seems to be invited by nature to enter joyfully into life, he read the ancient authors with eagerness, wrote verses, and studied drawing and music.*

Unfortunately few particulars relating to his earlier years have been found : history seems to have purposely withheld from us in what manner his spirit was evolved, what was his mental training ; all details are wanting that would have informed us of the progress of his studies, the difficulties he had to contend with, and the gradual formation of the mind and heart of a man destined to play so important a part in the world's affairs. This, perhaps, may be accounted for by the absence of any remarkable facts, worthy of being transmitted to posterity. Most probably the true history of his youth was to be found only in those inmost thoughts, those secret impressions, which few could have been acquainted with. Instead of them, we must look to the circumstances by which he was surrounded, in order to reason justly as to the impressions they must have left upon his mind ; for he was at no time of his life wholly absorbed by solitary meditations, but always felt himself carried along with the society in which he lived, and took an interest in the people around him, with whom in truth he mixed so long as he was not compelled, by disgust of their vices, to separate himself from them.

Those who see the now deserted state of the city of Ferrara, its empty streets, where scarce a living soul is to be met, and where the grass grows amid the paving

* Fra Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, MS. lib. i. c. viii. Burlamacchi, *Vita*, &c.

stones, can with difficulty imagine the splendid capital of the Este, with its hundred thousand inhabitants,* with a court which was considered among the first in Italy, with constant visits from princes, emperors and popes; with festivities that seemed to have no end. Such it was when Savonarola was born, and until he arrived at manhood. Belonging to a family attached to the court, the conversation he heard constantly turned upon these fêtes and entertainments, and thence he naturally imbibed the first impressions of his childhood. It will not, therefore, be out of place if we pause to cast a glance upon that court.

In the year 1402 Nicholas III. ruled the state, with the title of marquis; there being united to it the rich and fertile province of Modena. He was in constant strife with nobles who occupied the surrounding castles; and after having subdued them by force of arms, by cunning devices, and treachery, he became an absolute sovereign, and devoted himself to render his court illustrious during a reign of peace. He erected the tower of the cathedral, the palaces of Belriguardo and Santa Maria Belfiore, and other splendid buildings. We have said how he brought Michael Savonarola from Padua, and many persons from other places, among whom was the celebrated scholar Guarino of Verona, and to him he entrusted the education of his two natural sons, Lionel and Borso. They were afterwards legitimized, and, by the express desire of their father, they, one after the other, succeeded him in the government, in preference to his legitimate son Hercules, who was then of too tender an age. Lionel thus succeeded Nicholas in 1441, and was followed by Borso in 1450. They ruled in times of no small difficulty. The extinction of the house of Visconti, the revolt in

* Such is the amount given by its historians.

Milan, the jealousy of Venice and the neighbouring states, had kindled wars all around, into one or other of which it seemed impossible for the Este to avoid being dragged. They however not only contrived to keep out of them, but became mediators between contending princes and hostile states, so that Ferrara obtained the title of The Land of Peace. But that which more than anything else extended the fame of the Este was the magnificence of their court, and the title of Mæcenas having been awarded to them before any other Italian prince. Lionel was, in fact, the friend of many learned men, he was the protector of Guarino, of Valla, of Trapezunzio, and many besides; he founded the celebrated Este Museum, rendered the University renowned; built the hospital of Santa Anna, and several public edifices. He kept up his court in splendid luxury, and the entertainments he gave on the occasion of his marriage were the talk of all Italy. He however reigned only nine years; and, on his death, which took place in 1450, he was succeeded by Borso, who very soon caused the splendour and magnificence of his brother to be forgotten. Marquis Borso was a man of the Medici stamp; he was not without good qualities, but they on all occasions showed themselves to have had but one object in view, namely, to make himself prominent, and the subject of public talk. When justice cost him nothing, he loved justice and caused it to be strictly administered; but he usually preferred the title of The Just, which had generally been bestowed on him, to justice itself. He provided that the weight of the taxes should fall equally upon all the citizens, and took upon himself the support of the university. He was the first to introduce into Ferrara the art of printing, then almost in its infancy; he established the Carthusian convent; he fortified the city on the side next the Po, and extended the boundaries of his state. The discords that began

in Italy during the reign of Lionel grew stronger in his own, and he lived in more difficult times. Nevertheless, he managed to remain neutral, and became the arbitrator in almost all the disputes among the Italian States. So wide had his reputation extended, that Indian princes sent him rich presents, believing him to be the king of Italy.

It may appear strange that we should say that he obtained so great a name chiefly by the luxury of his court, and by the festivities with which he continually amused the people of Ferrara; but it is no less true. His reputed justice never stood the test of a severe proof; nor did his life pass without some grave offences being laid to his charge. It was apparent to every-one who rightly estimated the vaunted prudence by which he preserved peace among his warring neighbours, that it amounted to this, that he had the art to avoid espousing the cause of any-one, but kept himself always ready to take the side of the strongest. But he opened his house liberally to all; he had a rare collection of manuscripts and antiquities; he was always attired in cloth of gold; and the richest stuffs of Italy were displayed in the dresses of his courtiers; he had the finest falcons, dogs, and horses that were any-where to be seen; even his court fools became famous; and the printed descriptions of his fêtes circulated from one end of Italy to the other.

When in the year 1452 the emperor Frederick III. came to Italy with a train of two thousand followers, in order to receive the imperial crown at Rome, he passed through Ferrara. Borso met him, accompanied by his nobility and clergy, received him under a rich canopy, and during ten successive days the whole city was a scene of tournaments, feasting, music and dancing. The emperor, on his return from Rome, had determined to confer upon Borso the title of Duke, and

the festivities were resumed with fresh éclat. A magnificent platform was erected in the Piazza, on which the emperor was seated, wearing his mantle and the imperial crown, rich with jewels of the value of 150,000 florins. Borso advanced from his palace dressed in cloth of gold, and richly adorned with precious stones, accompanied by the nobility of Ferrara, amidst the applause of the people shouting ‘The duke! the duke! long live Duke Borso.’ When he came before the emperor he knelt at his feet, and received the coveted honour.

But the festivities which Savonarola was old enough to witness were even still more magnificent, and were given on a far more important occasion. At that time (1453) the fall of Constantinople by the increasing power of the Turk, and the consequent danger to the whole of Christendom, was uppermost in the thoughts of everyone, and all wished for a crusade; but whether or not from the prevalence of individual indifference and lukewarmness, the result was that no one moved in the matter. At length, in the year 1458, Eneas Silvio Piccolomini, being elevated to the pontificate with the title of Pius II., summoned a council, to be held at Mantua, where he should in person call upon the princes of Christendom to engage in a holy war. In the year 1459, accompanied by ten cardinals, sixty bishops, and a vast number of secular princes, with indescribable pomp, he traversed the cities of Italy, which vied with each other in sumptuous preparations to receive him with due honour. The Holy Father entered Florence in a litter supported by Galeazzo Maria Sforza and the noblemen Malatesta, Manfredi and Ordellaffi; the republic gave him a banquet such as they were only accustomed to bestow on the emperor or other great secular princes. At Ferrara the pope made his entrance under a canopy of cloth of gold;

the streets through which he passed were covered with cloth, and strewed with flowers; the richest tapestries were suspended from the windows, and the city resounded with instrumental and vocal music. In the cathedral, Guarino read a long Latin oration, full of learning and of praises of the pope, and the festivities were continued for eight days. He proceeded with the like state until his arrival at Mantua, on the 27th of May. He there gave a proof of marvellous eloquence in a speech in the Latin language, moving his audience to tears by the description he gave of the miseries endured by the Christians in Constantinople. The learned Francesco Filelfo made a speech on the occasion, and Hippolita, the daughter of Francesco Sforza, delivered a Latin oration; lastly, the Greek ambassadors called forth a still more sincere and profound lamentation, by what they told of the misfortunes of their native land, and of the ferocious cruelty of the Turks. All the princes offered their aid in men and money, and Duke Borso promised the sum, enormous for him, of 300,000 florins. But it was soon seen that he had been more craftily than liberally disposed. Those grand preparations produced nothing more than talk, and the foolish attempt of René of Anjou to obtain possession of the kingdom of Naples by a small army of French, was sufficient to put an end to the whole Oriental project.

The pope returned to Ferrara the next year, without having accomplished anything; nevertheless, the festivities with which he was received were even on a greater scale than the former. The duke went forth to meet him on the Po in a magnificent barge, accompanied by a myriad of boats decked out with flags and carrying bands of music; they occupied the entire breadth of the river, slowly advancing with the royal barge. On the river's banks, which were strewed with flowers, a multitude of youths, dressed in white, were in waiting,

holding garlands in their hands; and the place where the pope was to land was encircled by statues of the pagan deities.

There can be little doubt that Savonarola was a spectator of this great display, and that he long heard it spoken of; but it is not easy to say what were the deep impressions which such doings were calculated to leave upon that young mind. His religious enthusiasm must have been greatly shocked by such profanations; and thus from early youth his heart was troubled by various sorrows, and he felt himself at open war with the world in which he lived.

Borso continued to pass his life after the same fashion, and the people of Ferrara continued to live in the same round of amusements. Such frivolity was but too common in the rest of Italy, where a careless and corrupt life was everywhere prevalent; paganism had invaded the land on all sides, and the people had given themselves up to wanton and thoughtless pleasures.

The duke died on the 27th of May, 1471, and before his ashes were cold, Nicholas, a son of Lionel, and Hercules, the legitimate son of Nicholas III., now arrived at majority, fiercely disputed the succession by force of arms: the contest ended in favour of Hercules. He made a triumphant entry into Ferrara on the 24th of August, and was received with acclamations by the people as their sovereign lord, while the followers of Nicholas were slaughtered in the streets, and those who were able to make their escape were declared contumacious, and were condemned to death.* The feastings and dancings resumed their wonted rounds, and on the morrow the people had forgotten the blood that had been shed on the preceding day. Such was

* Muratori, *Antichità Estense*; Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*, chap. lxxviii; Litta, *Famiglie Italiane*; Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura*, tomo vi. cap. ii.

the famous, the splendid, jovial court of the Este; such were the persons of distinction who were courted, and probably lauded to the sky, by the family of our Savonarola.

We search in vain to discover in his biographies what were the impressions which such proceedings made upon him, and what judgements were passed upon them in his own mind. They describe him to us, as leading a sad and solitary life; going about dejected and disconsolate; rarely speaking; wasting in body; praying constantly with much fervour; passing many hours in the churches, and observing frequent fastings. *Heu! fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum*, were words that continually and almost involuntarily fell from his lips.* He was then deeply immersed in the reading of the Bible and St. Thomas Aquinas; his only recreation was to play some mournful melody on the lute, or to write verses, which were not without energy and simplicity, and by which he gave vent to the sorrows that weighed upon his heart. As an example of these, we quote the following from a poem entitled *De Ruina Mundi*, composed in the year 1472, wherein he very clearly depicts the state of his mind, the sadness and discomfort of his thoughts.

Vedendo sotto sopra tutto il mondo,
Ed esser spenta al fondo
Ogni virtute, ed ogni bel costume,
Non trovo un vivo lume,
Nè pur chi de' suoi vizi si vergogni. †

* * * * *

Felice ormai chi vive di rapina,
E che dell' altrui sangue più si pasce:
Chi vede spolia e i suoi pupilli infasce,
E che ‡ di povri corre alla ruina.

* Letter to his father, Appendix A.

† 'Seeing the whole world in confusion; every virtue and noble habit disappeared; no shining light; none ashamed of their vices.'

‡ Meier has printed *chi* instead of *che*; which perhaps is better gram-

Quell' anima è gentile e peregrina
Che per fraude e per forza la più acquisto ;
Chi sprezza il ciel con Cristo,
E sempre pensa altrui cacciare al fondo. *

These sentiments were so deeply impressed on his mind, that, as his biographers relate, on an occasion when his parents wished to take him to the ducal palace, he refused with a firmness of resolve most remarkable at his age; nor would he ever after set his foot within it. Truly, that sombre quadrangular mass, with its four turrets, wide ditches and draw-bridges, was well calculated to represent the tyranny that lay entrenched amidst the people of Ferrara. Those walls had not yet been consecrated by the recollections of Eleanora and Tasso, whose immortal shades seem still to walk in the splendid saloons, and to dispel all painful thoughts; nor did people then from curiosity visit those subterranean prisons, where seven iron gratings excluded the light; for in them were heard the clashing of chains and the groans of the miserable beings there buried, and over their heads the sounds of music and banqueting, the ringing of silver, of brilliant majolica, and Venetian glass. Such contrasts could not fail to touch the earnest mind and sensitive heart of Savonarola. He shuddered at such sights, and during his whole life he had a melancholy recollection of the scenes he had witnessed in his youth. His mind was so often overcome with grief that he could find no relief except in church.

matically, but is not according to the original. He is entitled to the honour of having been the first to publish the poems of Savonarola, in the Appendix to his very valuable biography, a work almost unknown in Italy. For the poetry, see the Florence edition, 1847. For the title of this work, see the Preface, page 6.

* 'He is happy who lives by rapine, and feeds on the blood of another; who robs widows and his own infant children; he who drives the poor to ruin. That soul is refined and rare who gains the most by fraud and force, who scorns heaven and Christ, and whose constant thoughts are bent on others' destruction.'

Prayer was the continued solace of that excited mind; he bathed with his tears the steps of the altars, where he lay prostrate many long hours, imploring comfort from God amidst the evils of a dissolute, vile, and corrupt age.*

There lived at this time next to his father's house a Florentine exile, bearing the illustrious name of Strozzi, who had with him a natural daughter. A citizen banished from the native country of Dante could not fail to have a more than ordinary charm for a mind like that of Savonarola. He viewed him as oppressed by unjust enemies, as suffering for the love of liberty and his native land; and by what he saw in the home of that exile, he began to conceive that there might be a people very different from that by which he was surrounded. His eyes met those of the young Florentine girl, and he then felt that first secret revelation of the heart which creates a belief in a happiness on earth. The world shone forth to him with a new light; with a fancy kindled by a thousand hopes, he dreamt of happy days, and, full of ardour and of trust, he revealed his passion to the loved fair one. But what was his grief on receiving her proud reply! in rejecting his proposal she gave him to understand that a Strozzi would not so far demean herself as to become allied to a Savonarola! He resented the affront with words full of scorn, but his heart was left desolate.† In an instant his dreams and long cherished hopes were annihilated; all happiness in life fled from him, and he was once more left alone in a multitude, every one of which shunned him. He was

* Burlamacchi, p. 5; Jo. Franc. Pici, *Vita*, &c., p. 9.

† This love of Savonarola, long unknown, is mentioned by Benedetto in his *Vulnera Diligentis*, MS. lib. i. cap. ix. And here let us do justice to Meier, who was the first to make use of, and set a just value upon this work of Benedetto. It is not long since it was discovered in Italy, and the book disclosed what was believed to be a new fact by all who had not read Meier's work.

then twenty years of age. The recent event of the succession of Hercules made him despair of his country; and the passion on which he had founded all his hopes of happiness he had found to be a cruel illusion. Where then was he to rest his laboured and wearied soul? His thoughts turned spontaneously to God.*

Se non che una speranza †
 Pur al tutto non lascia far partita,
 Ch' io so che in l' altra vita
 Ben si vedrà qual alma fu gentile
 E che alzò l' ale a più leggiadro stile. ‡

The religious sentiment became powerfully dominant over his whole mind; and it created in his heart a new source of comfort, which laid open to him, at length, a secure course of life. His prayers became daily more fervent, and rarely concluded without his uttering—
 ‘O Lord, make known to me the way in which I am to guide my soul!’ § Thus early had the thought frequently arisen in his mind of abandoning the world and giving himself up entirely to religion, and the admiration he had for St. Thomas Aquinas inclined him to become a member of the order of St. Dominick. But in the year 1474, being on a visit at Faenza, he happened to hear a sermon of an Augustine monk, some expressions in which made so deep an impression upon him, that he

* ‘As the world opened upon him, its religious and moral darkness appalled, repelled, drove him to seek any sanctuary where he might dwell alone with himself and with God. Nor was this the act of a timid, over-scrupulous, superstitious mind. Perhaps in no period of the civilised world, since Christ, was the moral condition of mankind, in some respects, in a lower and more degraded state; never were the two great enemies of human happiness — ferocity and sensuality — so dominant over all classes; and in those vices Italy, in one sense the model and teacher of the world, enjoyed, and almost boasted, a fatal pre-eminence.’—*Quarterly Review*, vol. xcix. p. 3. Ascribed to Dean Milman.—TR.

† In the same poem, *De Ruina Mundi*.

‡ ‘There is still a hope which does not entirely abandon me. Thus it is that in the other life it will be clearly seen whose soul was gentle and kind, and who elevated his wings to a higher style.’

§ See the letter to his father (Appendix A.), to which we shall presently refer.

formed the irrevocable determination to devote himself to a monastic life.*

On his way back to Ferrara, he felt cheerful as he went along, but he had no sooner set foot in his father's house, than he perceived that he was about to be subjected to a very hard trial. He felt the necessity of concealing his resolution from his parents; but his mother, as if aware of what was passing within him, turned to him with such an expression of grief as if she would make it penetrate his very heart; so that he did not dare to look her in the face. This struggle lasted a whole year, and many a time in after years he called to mind the poignant grief he then suffered. 'If,' he said, 'I had laid open my whole mind, I believe that my heart would have burst, and that I should have renounced the determination already taken.'† Some time afterwards, it was on the 23rd of April, 1475, sitting with his lute and playing a sad melody; his mother, as if moved by a spirit of divination, turned suddenly round to him, and exclaimed mournfully, 'My son, that is a sign we are soon to part.'‡ He roused himself, and continued, but with a trembling hand, to touch the strings of the lute, without raising his eyes from the ground.

Next day, the 24th of April, was a great holiday in Ferrara, the celebration throughout the city of the festival of St. George, and his parents, like other people, were engaged with it. He had been meditating to leave his father's house on that very day, and so, finding himself alone, he sallied forth on his way to Bologna. On his arrival there, he went straight to the convent of St.

* Savonarola himself alludes to this in his Sermons, when he says that *a single word* was so strongly impressed on his heart, that he never could forget it; and the following year he became a monk. What that word was, remained ever after with him an almost mysterious secret, and he never told it to his intimate friends. See Pico, Burlamacchi, Fra Benedetto, &c.

† Letter to his father quoted above.

‡ Fra Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, lib. i. cap. x.

Dominick, and declared his wish to assume the conventual dress, asking only to be employed in the most humble offices within the walls. He was desirous to be employed as a servant, that he might do penance for his sins, and not to pass, according to the then very prevalent custom, from *secular Aristotle to the Aristotle of the cloister*. He was received at once, and prepared himself for entering on his noviciate.

No sooner was he alone than his first thoughts reverted to his family, and on that same day (April 25) he wrote an affectionate letter to his father, in which he tried to comfort him, and laid before him the reasons for the step he had taken. 'The cause,' he says, 'which led me to adopt this resolution, was this, that I could no longer endure the gross corruption of the age, and witness throughout Italy vice triumphant and virtue in the dust. It was not a juvenile decision, but one taken after much meditation, and long-endured grief. I had not the heart to make my intention known to you, from the fear that I might not have sufficient courage to carry it into execution. Dearest father'—he thus concludes—'do not allow your sorrow to be added to mine, already most severe. Take courage, comfort my mother, and together with hers, send me your blessing.' *

Such was the tenour of the letter, and he added, that near the window he had left some papers in which would be found described the state of his mind. His father lost no time in searching for them among his son's books, and found in the place indicated, a writing with the title—'*On a Disregard of the World.*' He had there given expression to the same sentiments as those contained in his letter, describing the habits of the time, and com-

* This letter is given in full in all the biographies, but in all of them incorrectly. Count Carlo Capponi, having found the autograph, was able to restore to it its right reading, in a small work published on the occasion of his brother's marriage. See Appendix A.

paring them with those of Sodom and Gomorrah—‘There is no one, not even one, remaining who desires that which is good; we must learn from children and women of low estate, for in them only yet remains any shadow of innocence. The good are oppressed, and the people of Italy are become like the Egyptians who held God’s people in servitude. But already we see famines and inundations, and pestilences, and many other signs of coming evil that will announce the anger of the Almighty. Part, O Lord, part again the waters of the Red Sea, and drown the wicked in the waves of thy indignation.’* This short tract was believed by all the biographers to have been lost, but was found in the possession of the Gondi family of Florence, to whom it had been sent, in sacred confidence, by Marco Savonarola in 1604. It is of historical importance, because we clearly perceive by it, how, from his first entering the convent, he foresaw the scourges about to be inflicted on Italy, and because it shows us that there then existed in his mind a feeling that an extraordinary mission had been confided to him by God. He besought the Lord

* This small work has hitherto not only not been published, but was believed to be hopelessly lost. Signor Aquarone, in a biography of Savonarola, published in Piedmont, thought that the writing ‘*On a Disregard of the World*,’ was a poem only, till it was found in the Magliabecchian library, classe vii. chap. iii. cod. 365. But the manuscript of it in the possession of the Gondi family removes all doubt; for we find in it what follows:—‘I remember how, on the 24th of April, which was St. George’s day, in the year 1475, Girolamo my son, then a student of arts (being intended for the medical profession), left our house and went to Bologna, and entered the Dominican Convent, intending to remain there and become a monk: leaving me, Nicolo Savonarola his father, for my comfort, nothing but these writings.’ This paper together with the letters sent by Savonarola to his father, remained in his family until the year 1604, when one of the Gondi family, who had always been most devoted to the memory of the friar, asked Marco Savonarola, to allow him to see them. The latter sent them, accompanied by a letter, in which he said that he parted with them with tears in his eyes, and requested that they might be sent back by return of post. But not only the letter to the father, which appears to have been the original itself, but also the tract, which was an ancient copy, were kept in possession of by the Gondi.

that the passage of the Red Sea might be opened, so that the good might pass through and the wicked be drowned, but at the same time he did not conceal from himself the hope that the rod with which the command was to be given to the waters to part might one day be placed in his hand. He vainly endeavoured to conceal this idea from himself; in vain did he submit to be employed in the most menial offices of the convent, notwithstanding that hopes and designs of the most extraordinary nature were nurtured in his breast.

What effect those writings had on the minds of his parents we know not, but it may well be conceived that they bitterly lamented this unexpected resolution of their son, for we find a second letter from him, in which he reproves their immoderate complainings. ‘If,’ he says, ‘a temporal prince’—alluding to the profession of his eldest brother—‘had girt me with a sword and enrolled me as one of his followers, you would have thought that an honour had been conferred on your house, and would have rejoiced; and now that the Lord Jesus Christ has girt me with his sword and made me one of his knights, you weep.’* After this, his parents had nothing left but to become resigned, and Savonarola applied his whole mind to his newly assumed duties.

He was of middle stature, of a dark complexion, and of a sanguineo-bilious temperament; his nervous system was exquisitely delicate and sensitive. His eyes flashed from under black eyebrows, his nose was aquiline, his mouth wide with full lips, which however he held compressed in such a manner as to manifest an immovable firmness of purpose: his forehead, which even then was furrowed with wrinkles, indicated a mind given to contemplation and deep thought. His whole physiognomy had, in truth, nothing of the beautiful in it, but at the

* This letter has not hitherto been published: See Appendix B.

same time there was an expression of stern nobleness of character; and a certain melancholy smile gave his coarse and sharp features such an expression of goodness that his very look inspired confidence. His manners were simple and unpolished; his discourse, although unadorned and even almost rough, became so animated, effective, and powerful to such an extent, as to convince and subdue every hearer.* In his conventual life he usually observed a profound silence, being wholly given up to the contemplation of heavenly things. When walking in the cloisters, he appeared more like a spectre than a living man, to such a degree was he emaciated by fasts and abstinence; the most severe trials of the noviciate appeared light to him; and the superiors of

* Besides the descriptions of Pico and Burlamacchi, Father Benedetto has given us a minute account of Savonarola's person, both in his *Vulnera Diligentis* and in his *Cedrus Libani*, a short poem written in honour of him, which was first quoted by Meier, and was afterwards published by Father Marchese, in the *Archivio Storico*. There are also three portraits of the friar, which are moreover remarkable as works of art. One is an admirable intaglio in carnelian, by Giovanni delle Corniole, in the Florentine Gallery, at the Uffizi; another is a picture in the Academy of the Fine Arts in Florence (*Accademia di belle Arti*), by Fra Bartolommeo, representing him in the character of St. Peter the Martyr, which was probably painted after his death; and the third is another picture, by the same artist, in the possession of Signor Ermolao Rubieri. These three portraits represent him under three different aspects. In the intaglio you see the boldness of the orator, fulminating against vices, and prophesying the ruin of Italy; the countenance excited, and the eye darting fire.¹ In the first-mentioned picture, you have all the benevolence and gentleness of the martyr; in the second, the holy man is rapt in the contemplation of heavenly things. Many other portraits could be named, but none are so authentic, or so nearly contemporary. We must not, however, forget to mention a painting in the Convent of St. Mark, which although much injured, and without any artistic merit, expresses a certain degree of force of expression. All his portraits represent him with his hood drawn over his head, except that one in the Academy of the Fine Arts. In that may be observed a certain flatness of the upper part of the cranium, which, according to some, was the cause why he always covered his head. We shall elsewhere notice several medals of him.

¹ It is reported that when Michael Angelo saw this gem, he said that art could go no further.—Tr.

the convent had constantly to restrain him from doing too much. On the days he did not fast he hardly ate enough for the support of life. His bed was of wicker-work with a sack of straw and a blanket ; his cloaks were made of the coarsest material, but he was most exemplary in point of cleanliness. His modesty, his humility, and submissive spirit were without a parallel in the convent ; the fervour of his prayers was such as to excite the wonder of his superiors, and his brother monks often believed him to be in a trance. It seemed as if the walls of the convent, by separating him from the world, had restored to him his peace of mind, and that he wished for nothing more than to obey and to pray.

CHAPTER II.

FROM HIS ENTERING THE CONVENT UNTIL HIS FIRST
ARRIVAL IN FLORENCE.

[1475—1482.]

SAVONAROLA remained seven years in the Dominican Convent at Bologna. There, in the solitary cloisters, in the majestic temple, where the ashes of the bold founder of the Order rest under a noble monument, the work of Nicola Pisano, he divided his time between prayers and privations. The superiors, however, were not long in discovering his learning, and the rare qualities of his mind; and instead of allowing him to be employed in the menial offices to which it was his own wish to be devoted, they appointed him to instruct the novices. At first he regretted to be obliged to abstract any portion of his time from prayer and religious exercises, but reflecting that obedience had become a primary duty, and that he should be able to lead his companions into the paths of virtue and religion, he applied himself with a willing heart to the new duty.

Those would be greatly mistaken who would infer that submissiveness and humility occupied his whole thoughts. His was a spirit full of faith, but it was not the less strong and ardent. The corruption of the age had led him to shut himself up in a convent, where he seemed to have found peace in solitude and prayer; but when he considered the wretched condition of the

Church, his blood boiled with indignation, and thoughts would rise up in his breast which he tried in vain to curb by religious discipline and by all the power of his will.

The same year in which he renounced the world, that year of general excitement, he gave vent to his most secret thoughts in a poem entitled *De Ruina Ecclesiæ*. In it he asks the Church, which he typifies as a chaste virgin,—‘Where are the ancient doctors; the ancient saints; the learning, the love, the purity of past days?’ and she, taking him by the hand into a cavern, replies—‘When I saw proud ambition penetrate to Rome and contaminate everything, I retired and shut myself up in this place,

*Ove io conduco la mia vita in pianto —
Where I spend my life in weeping.’*

After which, she shows him the wounds by which her beautiful body had been disfigured; and then Savonarola, overwhelmed with grief, invokes the saints in heaven, imploring them to have compassion on such misfortunes:—

Prostrato è il tempio e l’edifizio casto.
The temple and the chaste dwelling lie prostrate.

‘But who has brought things to this state?’ he resumes, and the Church replies, pointing to Rome: ‘*Una fallace, superba meretrice*; a deceitful and proud harlot.’ Then the youthful and devout novice, the solitary and humble brother, utters words which reveal his whole soul:—

*Deh! per Dio, donna,
Se romper si potria quelle grandi ale!*
O God, lady, that I could break those soaring wings!

To which the Church responds in a tone of reproof,—

*Tu piangi e taci; e questo meglio parmi:—**
Weep and remain silent; this to me seems best.

* *Poesie del Savonarola*, canzone ii., with a comment by the same author. Firenze, 1847.

The condition of Savonarola in the convent may be thus described: fasting and prayer were his sources of comfort, to instruct the novices was his recreation; but he was overwhelmed with profound grief, with an irrepressible feeling of indignation that the Church should be so debased and full of corruption. He weeps and is silent 'tis true, but ever and anon the thought arises—O God! that those soaring wings, wings that carry only to perdition, could be broken! If we figure to ourselves the events that daily presented themselves to this excited mind, in which he saw the dreadful, the obscene pictures of what was going on at the Roman court, we shall then be able to conceive the fire that was kindled in a heart already in so inflammable a state.

After the death of Pius II. in 1464, there began that scandalous corruption of the popes which reached its climax in the pontificate of Alexander VI. The bad faith and insatiable avarice of Paul II. soon became known to the whole world, and when Francesco della Rovere succeeded him in 1471, under the name of Sixtus IV. years still more sad appeared to be in store for the Church. It was notorious that the election of the new pope had been carried by simony; all Rome could name the individuals who had sold their votes and the preferments they had each obtained. The scandalous lust of Sixtus knew no bounds; his prodigality in spending was equalled only by his unquenchable thirst for gold; and so blinded was he by his passions, that he recoiled from no unworthy means to accomplish his dishonest aims; and there was no infamous act that he was not ready to commit.

The treasure which had been accumulated with insatiable avidity by Paul II. speedily disappeared; and the dazzling luxury of the nephews of Sixtus soon made it manifest into whose hands it had fallen. There

were four of them ; one was made Prefect of Rome ; another a cardinal, he who was afterwards Julius II. ; a third bought the city of Imola with a sum of 40,000 gold ducats, and married the daughter of Galeazzo Sforza ; but the worst of all, and the greatest favourite of Sixtus, was Pietro Riario. Such was the affection of the Pope for this young man of six and twenty, that a thousand scandalous rumours were current in Rome respecting it. From being a simple friar, he was raised to the dignity of Cardinal Prelate, with the title of San Sisto ; he was created Patriarch of Constantinople and Archbishop of Florence. He had unbounded influence at court ; wherever he moved, he was followed by crowds ; and his audiences were more frequented than those of the pope himself. His magnificence, according to a contemporary writer,* exceeded all that their ancestors had seen or that posterity could imagine. On receiving the French ambassadors, he gave them a banquet on which all the known arts of the time were exercised ; the country round was ransacked for productions the most rare and costly ; and all means were applied to do that which future times might never be able to imitate. Descriptions of this banquet, in verses, were circulated not only in every city of Italy, but crossed the Alps and were spread over all Europe. When Eleanor of Arragon, the daughter of the King of Naples, was on her way, in 1473, to espouse the Duke of Ferrara, she stopped at Rome, when the luxury Riario displayed exceeded all bounds. Cardinals and ambassadors received the bride, and conducted her to the pope through streets covered with fine cloth and tapestry, and then led her to a palace built expressly for the occasion by Riario, next to his own, the walls of which, constructed of the finest woods, were

* Jacopo Ammannati.

lined with silk, supported by gold ornaments; the plates, the goblets, and every kind of table service, were of gold and silver.*

In this way Cardinal Riario, in less than a year, spent the sum of 200,000 florins; and, notwithstanding his many very rich preferments, he had incurred a debt of 60,000 florins. This however did not induce him to moderate his excesses; on the contrary, the very same year he went to Milan where he competed in extravagance with Duke Galeazzo, one of the most dissolute princes of Italy. He then went to Venice, and was so abandoned in profligacy that his vital powers gave way under his evil habits, and returning to Rome, he died on January 5, 1474. This was the origin of the scandal and blot on the papacy known by the term *nepotism*; and Sixtus continued to follow the same evil course of life, until the year 1484, the last of his pontificate. True it is, that at that time the age was most corrupt, there was a general uneasiness on account of the desolate state of the Church. The world held in abhorrence the scandalous lives of the four nephews of the pope, as well as his own, which was given up to avarice and lust, and to a blind indulgence of all his passions. †

He who, turning from contemplating the state of the Church at that time, should look into that of other states of Italy, would find equal cause for unhappiness. They were truly miserable times. Not only was there cause for lamentation that liberty had been long lost, but that the petty princes who tyrannised over the people showed neither the energy nor the political sagacity for

* Sismondi, chap. lxxxiii.; Muratori, *Antichità Estensi*, nella Vita del Duca Ercole I.

† See Sismondi, *Leo*, &c.; Steph. Infessuræ, *Diarium Curie Romæ*, in Jo. Ge. Eccardi, *Corpus Historicorum Medii Ævi*, tome ii. Lipsiæ, 1723; Platina, *De Vitis Pontificum*, Basil, 1529. See also Rudelbach, loc. cit. *Einleitung: Die Signatur des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts: I. Papstmacht.*

which their fathers had been distinguished. That craving after power, and the eager and boundless ambition by which they were stimulated, had disappeared, and the race of princes appeared to have all at once fallen into decay. In the kingdom of Naples, Ferdinand I. of Arragon had succeeded to Alphonso the Magnificent, and had well earned the title of The Cruel. The only means he resorted to, to free himself of his enemies, were cunning, dissimulation, and treachery; and he was moreover so miserly and mean that he competed with his own subjects in their private affairs and properties. In Florence, the incapable Piero de Medici had replaced his wary and able father, the first Cosmo, and during the few years that he was at the head of affairs, he so endangered the supremacy of his family, that had he lived longer his son Lorenzo would have been unable to hold the reins of government. In Milan, the feeble Galeazzo had succeeded in 1465 to the valorous condottiero and astute politician, Francesco Sforza; and, lastly, in Venice, the able and ambitious Doge Francesco Foscari had, in 1457, been followed in office by Pasquale Malipiero, renowned only for the fêtes which he gave in the Piazza of St. Mark. A degradation so universal seemed a mysterious fatality, which could only be accounted for by the circumstance that the fathers of the actual rulers had attained supreme power in their several states through many dangers overcome, had been constrained to oppose all kinds of obstacles, and had had to contend with an infinite number of enemies; whereas their sons had been born in years of peace, had grown up among courtiers, and had been educated in effeminate indulgence.

Nor were those many evils the only ones that then afflicted Italy; there were others not less serious. It seemed as if the effeminate conduct of the princes had roused the resentment of their subjects, among whom

were a few men, who, discontented with the new state of things, were ready to hazard any peril, to attempt any measure, however desperate. Those years appeared, in fact, to have become years of conspiracies. Three such occurred in 1476. Girolamo Gentile attempted to rescue Genoa from a military yoke. Olgiati, Visconti, and Lampugnani stabbed Duke Galeazzo in a church, and were afterwards themselves murdered by a furious populace in the streets of Milan. At Ferrara, Nicholas d'Este again tried the fortune of arms with 600 men, and perished along with them. These conspiracies had thus ended in the destruction of those who had planned them, and rendered the condition of the people worse than it had been before, by making the tyranny of their rulers more stable and cruel.

Nevertheless, the imminence of the danger, so far from creating terror, rather excited men to venture upon deeds more and more desperate, till not a year passed without some event of the kind. But no conspiracy was so terrible as that in Florence in 1478, which broke out on April 26, when, in the cathedral itself, during the celebration of mass, and at the very moment of the elevation of the host, Giuliano de Medici was assassinated by the Pazzi, and the blow aimed at his brother Lorenzo only failed by his having had time to draw his sword and escape into the sacristy. Politian, who was by his side, and who quickly closed the door, relates that the cries and confusion were so great that it seemed as if the whole church were falling in ruins.* This conspiracy was assuredly one of no ordinary kind, whether we consider the caution and boldness with which it had been planned, the moment chosen for its being carried into execution, or the high rank of the persons engaged in it, and who became its victims. But

* A. Politiani, *De Pactiana Conjuratone Historia sive Commentarium*.

that which more than anything else makes it remarkable is the number and rank of the clergy who were concerned in it. The dagger with which Lorenzo de Medici was to be struck was placed in the hand of a priest; Cardinal Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, was at the head of the conspirators in Florence and in Rome, and the most violent and determined instigator of the plot was the Holy Father himself, Sixtus IV. He had hoped by this means to add to the power of his nephews, and at its failure he could not restrain his fury; regardless of every consideration, he became the avowed enemy of the people of Florence, and declared open war against them.

It was in such times and amidst such deeds that the mind of Savonarola was gradually formed. He looked upon the state of the world and the condition of the Church with a degree of horror and of grief for which he could find no relief except in prayer and study. The esteem entertained for him by the superiors in the convent went on increasing, so that from the office of tutor to the novices they raised him to the pulpit. He undertook the new duty with ardour, for his first intention of shutting himself up in silence and solitude had begun to give way before the imperious and constantly increasing necessity he felt for moral and intellectual activity; and this new field of exertion added a pleasurable strength to his young and proud spirit.

He appears to have adopted in these sermons the line he had followed in his lectures, dwelling however more on practical remarks and moral precepts. He gradually relinquished Aristotle to draw nearer and nearer to the Bible, which became his one and inseparable companion for the rest of his life. More respecting these sermons we cannot say, for they appear to have been attended with so little success that not a single writer of the time has mentioned them; nor does any recollection of them appear to have been preserved.

In the year 1482, the superiors of the convent sent him to preach in Ferrara. He was there as dead to the world; seeing none of his old acquaintances, and very little of his parents that could revive the affections he still fondly cherished. The streets, the houses, the churches of his native place recalled thoughts that he wished to banish from his mind. His fellow citizens seem to have thought so little of his preaching, that, some time after, we find him lamenting the verification in his own case, of the saying, that a prophet meets with no honour in his own country.* Not having seen any of those sermons we can with difficulty account for this indifference on the part of his hearers; the most probable reason that can be assigned appears to be this, that he did not follow the example of other preachers, who either lost themselves in interminable scholastic sophisms, or descended to a vulgar familiar language, such as, in our day, would scarcely be tolerated in a low tavern.† Besides, Savonarola could not yet have acquired his peculiar style of oratory; his manner was then too undecided to enable him so to command his hearers as to lead them into a better path. Still there must have been something both eloquent and effective in his manner, judging from many anecdotes mentioned by his biographers, as for instance, the following: Going one day from Ferrara towards Mantua, by the Po, in a small vessel, in which were thirteen soldiers who were gaming and blaspheming, without any regard

* Letter to his mother written from Pavia, on the day of the Conversion of St. Paul, 1490 (Appendix C.) He repeats the same thing very often in his sermons.

† See Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura*, where he speaks of the ecclesiastical orators of the fifteenth century. See also the sermons of Fra Paolo Attavanti, which Ficino represents as being worthy of Orpheus; and those of Father Roberto di Lecce, the most distinguished disciple of St. Bernardino. This last person was, however, remarkable for much simplicity and ingenuousness, every trace of which disappears in the ecclesiastical writings at the close of the century.

either to the dress or the dignity of the friar, he, being very indignant, addressed them, and straightway eleven of them fell down on their knees and asked forgiveness of the offence of which they had been guilty.* It is however a very different thing to remonstrate with a few soldiers, and persuade them to listen to the dictates of their consciences, than to deliver a sermon from a pulpit to a numerous audience. In the first instance natural eloquence is sufficient, and that Savonarola had in abundance; in the second, art has to be employed, and in that he was as yet deficient.

In that year, 1482, war threatening Ferrara from all sides, the superior of the Dominicans sent away a considerable number of the monks to different places, and Savonarola was directed to go to Florence. He then bid a last farewell to his parents, his friends, and his native place, for he was fated never to see them again.

The war was first directed against the Duke of Ferrara, but by little and little it spread all around, and divided almost the whole of Italy into two factions. The true causes of it were, on the one hand, the revived ambition of the Venetians to extend their dominion on *terra firma*, and, on the other, the immoderate desire of the Pope to increase the power of his nephews. These causes were kept in the background; the Pope assigning as a reason for his hostility, his desire to revenge himself on the Duke for having entered into the pay of the Florentines, in the war they had been forced into against him, after the failure of the conspiracy of the Pazzi; the Venetians availing themselves of certain disputed boundary questions, and of the everlasting contentions about the trade in salt. The Duke of Ferrara offered, in vain, to yield every point; but the powers above-mentioned were resolved on

* Burlamacchi.

immediate war, and they involved in it the republic of Genoa, and many of the petty princes who ruled in the March of Ancona and in Romagna. Against them were united the Duke of Ferrara, the Florentine republic, the King of Naples, and the Duke of Milan; together with the Marquis of Mantua, Bentivoglio, who ruled in Bologna, and the powerful House of Colonna. Thus all Italy was in arms; but the republic of Florence entered into the contest with words only, the rest had already begun the fight. The Duke of Calabria encountered the Papal troops commanded by Roberto Malatesta; the Colonna, issuing from their strongholds, laid waste the Campagna Romana, and the Genoese attacked the western frontier of the duchy of Milan. The Venetians took the principal lead in the war; they hemmed in Ferrara with two armies, and with a third they attacked the Duke of Milan, and pushed forward hostilities to such an extent that Ferrara, suffering from famine, could no longer carry on the contest. It had become evident that very soon all the advantages of the war would accrue to Venice.

No sooner did Sixtus perceive that the prey he so eagerly sought was about to escape from his hands, than, as if blinded by rage, he changed sides, formed a treaty with the King of Naples, granted the Duke of Calabria a free passage for his troops through the Papal States, excommunicated the Venetians, designating them the enemies of Christ, and calling upon the other powers of Italy to declare war against them. This sudden change could only take those by surprise who knew not the violent nature of Sixtus, nor to what excess his thirst for gold and extension of territory would carry him. The Venetians did not allow themselves to be frightened by the Pope, but his defection changed the whole state of the war. The army of the Duke of Calabria had already conveyed a supply of provisions into Ferrara,

and had stopped the progress of the besiegers; and operations began to be carried on tardily. The two armies lay face to face without coming to any serious conflict, the country round was daily pillaged, and while many died of hunger, few fell by the sword. Things went on with the same incredible lukewarmness until the year 1484, when, at length, all parties became worn out by a war that was alike ruinous. The general of the Venetian army then accepted proposals made to him for a treaty of peace, the armies on both sides retired, and the war ceased with satisfaction to every one, except the Pope. He did not cease to fan the flame he had kindled; for the loss of all the advantages he hoped to have gained by the war was a severe pang to him. When the ambassadors were presented to him on the 12th of August, and read to him the conditions of the peace, he started to his feet in a state of fury and exclaimed—‘You announce to me a peace of shame and disgrace.’ The following day an attack of the gout, to which he had been long subject, fell upon his chest, and the Holy Father expired from grief that war had ceased.*

These then were the wars which drove Savonarola from Ferrara to Florence. He crossed the solitary alpine heights of the Apennines to arrive in a new city, among a people unknown to him, and with a mind sorely troubled by the reflection that he had seen a Pope, for the sake of increasing the power of two or three dissolute young men, throw all Italy into confusion; and that at a time while the Turk was at their gates, and while scarce a year had passed since his descent at Otranto. The wind that whistled through the pine and beech trees seemed to utter curses upon those who had thus rent the mantle

* Sismondi, cap. lxxxviii; Leo, lib. v. § 7; Steph. Infessuræ, *Diarium*, &c.

of the spouse of Christ, and his too daring line probably then rang in his ears:—

Se romper si potria quelle grandi ale!

Oh, that I could break those soaring wings!

Arrived for the first time at Florence, in 1482, he went straight to the Convent of St. Mark, in which he was destined to pass the most brilliant and the most unhappy days of his life. As Savonarola and that convent are inseparably associated in the minds of posterity, it will be advisable to devote some sentences to its history.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, there was in Florence a miserable building, almost in ruins, inhabited by some monks of the order of St. Silvester, who led so scandalous a life that many of them were summoned before the Roman court. At length the elder Cosmo de' Medici, having obtained leave from the Pope, got the monks removed to another place, and the convent was given to the reformed Dominicans of the Lombard Congregation. Cosmo's desire was to erect an entirely new edifice from the foundation, and he entrusted the work to the celebrated architect Michelozzo Michelozzi, who, at the end of six years, and at a cost of 36,000 florins, completed it, in the year 1443. Cosmo was never sparing when it was a question of churches, monasteries, or other works which would add to his reputation for munificence and increase his ascendancy over the people. During the six years that the building of the new convent was in progress he was continually making donations to the Dominicans, and now that it was brought to a successful termination, he was not satisfied without adding to it a valuable library.

This, however, it was not easy to do, nor could it be accomplished at a small expense; for it was a question of collecting manuscripts, for which, just at that time,

enormous prices were paid. Chance, however, offered a favourable opportunity, and Cosmo availed himself of it. Niccolo Niccoli, known as the most celebrated collector of manuscripts in Europe, died at this time; he had been one of the most learned men of his day; he had spent his whole patrimony and his whole life in bringing together a collection of manuscripts which was the admiration of all Italy. He left it by will to the public, but the carrying that bequest into effect was protracted by his having left behind him great debts. Cosmo paid the debts; and with the exception of some of the most valuable of the manuscripts which he reserved for himself, he presented the whole collection to the Convent of St. Mark. Thus it was that the first public library was established in Italy; and it was kept by the monks in such excellent order that they showed themselves worthy of having received such a gift. St. Mark's became almost a centre of studies, and as all the convents in Upper Italy were united in that Congregation, the most learned monks came from them to Florence, adding a lustre to the new convent; and frequently the most celebrated men of the day came to hold converse with the friars. At that same period Father Giovanni di Fiesole, better known by the name of Beato Angelico, covered the walls with his incomparable paintings. But all those glories were far surpassed by the brotherhood having for a father and religious founder a saint bearing the name of Antonino, one of those characters who do honour to human kind.

It would be difficult to find in history an example of self-denial more constant, of charity more active, of love to our neighbour more truly evangelical. There is scarcely a charitable institution in Florence that he did not either found or revive. To him belonged the praise of changing into an institution of charity that society of the Bigallo which Peter the Martyr had established for

the extermination of heresy, and which had so often polluted the streets and walls of Florence with blood. From that time forward the officers of the Bigallo, instead of burning and slaying human beings, sought out and succoured neglected orphans. St. Antonino was the founder of the society called The Benevolent Men of Saint Martin (*Buoni Uomini di San Martino*) who, to this day, fulfil the Christian duty of collecting offerings and of distributing them to the poor of better condition who are ashamed to beg (*i poveri vergognosi*). It would be impossible to recount all that he did for the benefit of the people, but within the time embraced in our present history many were alive who remembered having seen him frequently traversing the city and surrounding country, leading a mule loaded with bread for some, and with clothes for others, and bringing relief to the dwellings of the poor which plague or famine had made desolate. His death, which occurred in Florence in 1459, was mourned as a public calamity, and when, in 1482, Savonarola entered St. Mark's Convent, the memory of him was so fresh and held in such veneration, that it seemed as if his spectre still walked in their cloisters. No one ever mentioned his name without reverence, and when the monks desired to describe a model of Christian virtue, they seemed unable to fix upon any other name than that of St. Antonino.*

* See Padre Vincenzo Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*, libro i., Firenze, Le Monnier, 1855. In this work, written with much elegance of style, and with equal diligence and precision, are to be found many particulars not confined to the Convent of St. Mark only, but regarding the life of St. Antonino.¹ He who wishes to have further details, will find them in the *Summa Historialis*, or *Chronicon*, of the Saint, with additions by the Jesuit Father Pietro Maturo, Lugduni, &c., ap. Junctas, 1585 et 1586, vol. iii.; Castiglioni, *Vita di Sant'Antonino*. What relates to the charitable institutions, will be found minutely described in the work of Passerini, *Storia degli Istituti di Beneficenza in Firenze*. See also Richa, *Notizie Storiche delle Chiese di Firenze*; *Annales Conventus S. Marci*; Fabroni, *Vita Magni Cosmi Medicei*.

¹ A beautiful marble statue of Saint Antonino was erected a few years ago, in the quadrangle of the Uffizi in Florence.—Tr.

In those early days, Savonarola appears to have been quite enchanted with what he saw around him. The lovely country, the soft outlines of the Tuscan hills, the increasing purity of language, and the more gentle manners of the people the nearer he approached Florence, all seemed to predispose him to look forward to a happy life in that true flower of Italian cities, where nature and art vie with each other in all that is most beautiful. To a mind like his, deeply imbued with the religious sentiment, Florentine art acted like sacred music, and bore witness to the omnipotence of genius inspired by faith. The paintings of Angelico appeared to have brought down angels from heaven to dwell in the cloisters of St. Mark, and he felt as if his soul had been transported to the world of the blessed. The holy traditions of St. Antonino, the works of his love, were still preserved and revered by the friars, and whom, moreover, he found so much more cultivated and refined than any he had yet known; all which contributed to inspire a hope that at length he had come to live with brethren. His heart gave itself up to that hope, he ceased to remember the sad disappointments he had endured, and he could not foresee those that were to come, when he had lived some time in Florence, and had learned to know its inhabitants from a nearer point of view.

CHAPTER III.

LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT,* AND THE FLORENTINES
OF HIS TIME.

WHEN Savonarola came to Florence, Lorenzo the Magnificent had reigned for several years, and was then in the zenith of his fame and power. Under his rule, everything wore the appearance of prosperity and happiness. The parties which from time to time had caused commotions in the city had long ceased to exist; and those who were unwilling to submit to the domination of the Medici had been either imprisoned, exiled, or put to death; so that there reigned a general tranquillity. The Florentine people, once so jealous of their rights, were kept constantly occupied with fêtes, dances, and tournaments, and seemed to have forgotten the very name of liberty.

* Born in 1448, and ruled from 1469 to 1492. I do not intend to fill this chapter with unnecessary quotations. The writers of the history of Lorenzo are too well known to require their names to be mentioned. I shall only say that Roscoe, in his *Life of Lorenzo*, a work to which all have recourse, is, of all, the least to be relied upon. It would be better to go at once to Fabroni (*Vita Laurentii Medicis*) whom Roscoe may be said to have plundered, as well in his text as in his Appendix. The character of Lorenzo can be best studied in his own writings (*Poesie di Lorenzo de' Medici*, Firenze, 1825, 4 vols. in quarto; *Canti Carnascialeschi*, in the collection of 1750); and in the numerous works of those contemporaries who wrote with freedom, and not to pay court to him. Considerable light is thrown upon the lives both of the elder Cosmo and of Lorenzo in the, until recently, unpublished writings of Guicciardini, an edition of which, brought out by the Counts Guicciardini, with illustrations by Giuseppe Canestrini, is in course of publication. I especially refer to the Dialogue on the *Reggimento di Firenze* in the second volume. There are also some unpublished *Discorsi* of Jacopo Nardi in the Riccardi library (cod. 2022), which will be found to confirm all the judgments I have passed on the governments of the Medici.

Lorenzo himself always took part in those diversions, and, day after day, either sought out or invented new ones. Among all his inventions, the most celebrated were those called the *Canti Carnascialeschi*, gay ballads, composed for the first time by him, and intended to be sung at masquerades during the Carnival; when the young nobility, in disguises representing the Triumph of Death, or a troop of devils, or some such whimsicality, ran shouting through the city. We cannot have a better picture of the corruption of those days than by reading those songs. In the present day, not only the young nobles, but the lowest rabble would be disgusted by them, and were they to be sung in the streets, it would be such an outrage to public decency as to call for punishment. But their composition was the favourite occupation of a prince praised by all the world, and held up as a model to other sovereigns as a prodigy of talent, as a political and literary genius. And such as he was then reckoned many now hold him to have been. He is pardoned by them for the blood he shed in maintaining a power which had been unjustly acquired by his family and himself, for the disorders he caused in the republic; for plundering the public treasury to defray his extravagant expenditure; for the indecent profligacy to which he was given up, * although infirm of body; and for the rapid and infernal system of corruption of the people, an object to which he never ceased to apply the whole force of his mind; and all this is overlooked because he was a patron of letters and of the fine arts.

Singular contrasts existed in the social state of Florence at that time. Education was generally diffused; all had learned Latin and Greek; all admired the classics, and many ladies were celebrated for their Greek and Latin verses. Painting, and the other fine arts, which

* See on this point, Macchiavelli, *Istorie Fiorentine*.

had fallen into decay from the time of Giotto, received new life ; and everywhere were to be seen new palaces, churches, and other edifices, distinguished by their elegance. But artists, men of letters, politicians, the gentry, and the common people, were alike corrupt in mind ; without virtue, public or private : guided by no moral sentiments. Religion was either used as a tool for governing, or was a low hypocrisy ; there was no faith in civil affairs, in religion, in morals, or in philosophy ; even scepticism did not exist with any degree of earnestness ; a cold indifference to principle reigned throughout. Men's countenances, while full of spirit, cleverness, and acute intelligence, wore a cold smile of superiority and of indulgent compassion when they met with any signs of enthusiasm for noble and generous feelings ; they did not dispute them nor treat them as doubtful, as a philosophical sceptic would have done, but they listened to them with a feeling of pity ; and this *vis inertiae* proved a greater hindrance to the growth of virtue than openly declared war would have been.

Such a state of morals had a powerful influence on the intellectual culture. Philosophy was mere erudition ; the scholastic, which was afterwards so much derided, and was then becoming neglected, had in it at least a youthful spirit, life, and ardour, which we seek for in vain in the writings of the fifteenth century. Letters were either philological disquisitions, or imitations of Virgil, Homer, or Pindar. Even so far back as the time of Boccaccio, Franco Sacchetti laments in his simple and pure verses the decay of literature ; and what afflicted him more, he says, was not so much the loss of men of great genius as the absence of all hope of any rising to fill their places, and that it was impossible to find any-one capable of understanding them.* If he had lived in

* Poesie di Franco Sacchetti, canzoni iv. ; nei *Lirici Italiani*, Firenze, 1839.

the time of which we are now speaking, he would have found far greater reason for lamentation; he would have heard the Italian language declared to be incapable of giving expression to lofty thoughts, he would have heard persons pronounce the *Divina Commedia* inferior to the rhymes and *Canti Carnascialeschi* of Lorenzo de' Medici.* The fine arts, which are the last to feel the effects of the moral and political misfortunes of a nation, no longer exhibited those great and lofty ideas with which Giotto, and Orgagna, and many others had adorned the monuments of Italy. It is most certain that in that age they could not have found another Arnolfo to erect the Duomo and the Palazzo Vecchio, which even in their walls display the spirit of liberty and independence.

But amid those misfortunes, even the loss of liberty was favourable to the progress of literature and art. All avenues being closed to political activity, to all ambition for distinction as statesmen, to any exercise of public virtue, and the commerce and branches of industry, by which such immense fortunes had been amassed, having fallen into decay, the active energy which still survived turned to the study of the arts and of letters; and although we no longer meet with the men of lofty genius who flourished in the days of the republic, there was at least a general movement in favour of cultivation. There arose great numbers of persons who were eager to learn new languages, to produce new books and new pictures, and they were the more eager because they could not make their studies subservient to advancement in other lines. The city had, in fact, the appearance of a great school; the passion which seemed to absorb every other was that of collecting manuscripts and antique statues; all discus-

* Among them, the celebrated Pico della Mirandola.

sions were on subjects either of grammar, philology, or erudition. After the fall of Constantinople, the learned Greeks repaired to western cities; and when they came to Florence, they were received with enthusiasm; and they, in their turn, by lectures and by their learning, excited to a still greater degree than had before existed an enthusiasm for the ancient authors, and to visit Greece, explore its temples and convents, and to dig in its soil for the discovery of ancient remains. Travels in the East were undertaken, from whence the travellers, after having suffered many discomforts and having encountered many dangers, after having spent patrimonies of no inconsiderable amount, returned loaded with treasures; no doubt more or less precious. History has recorded the fortunate researches of Poggio Bracciolini in almost every city of Europe; the travels in the east of Guarino of Verona, who having by a shipwreck lost, in a few hours, all he had collected with immense labour, is said to have been so afflicted that his hair turned white; those of Giovanni Aurispa, who returned to Venice with 238 manuscripts, acquired at the expense of his whole fortune; and, consequently, in his old age, while rich in fame was poor in means; those of Filelfo and many others, who went to visit the classic land of Greece. Every time that any of those travellers returned to Italy, and especially to Florence, his arrival was a source of general joy, a kind of triumph; the first people of the land came forth to meet him, princes received him with distinction, his discoveries were lauded in publications, and the letters of private friends contained little else. Then came discussions on the authenticity of the manuscripts and on the interpretation of them; philological and grammatical questions were warmly debated, disputes arose without end, and the learned tore each other to pieces in the attacks on each other's fame and

honour. This may be said to have been the only kind of liberty that remained to the Florentines.

The fine arts were more fortunate: the artists gave themselves up to the joyous life of the day; they revelled and worked with the same absence of care. It had become so much the fashion to patronise artists, that, throughout Italy, the rich, the nobles, the churches, the convents, all desired to possess their productions; they themselves were invited and welcomed everywhere, and thus they passed their lives between work and pleasure. If they had lost much in the loftiness of their conceptions, they gained much by their close attention to truth in their designs, and in the treatment of colour; painting in oil, then invented, opened a new era in the history of art. Sculpture and architecture, in which the material employed forms so much more important an element than in painting, also made great progress; partly by the aid afforded to them by the Greek and Roman remains, and partly by the numerous difficulties which practice taught them to overcome. In these departments, the names of Donatello, of Ghiberti, and of Brunellesco are immortal. The arts certainly attained in that period a delicacy of execution which was unknown in the preceding ages; but was lost in those that followed.

The facts I have now narrated had occurred before the power of the Medici was established, and were totally independent of any aid derived from them. The passion for classical studies had been spread from the days of Boccaccio, and had been constantly on the increase; private citizens had spent large fortunes in the travels and researches we have described, without hoping for any other reward than renown. The greatest artists nearly all flourished in the early part of the century; thus Brunellesco was born in 1377 and died in 1446; Ghiberti, 1381-1455; Donatello, 1386-1468;

Masaccio, 1402-1443; and their principal works were executed without either the protection or the counsel of the Medici.* The cupola of Brunellesco was ordered by a resolution of the citizens freely assembled in the Duomo in 1407; the brazen gates of Ghiberti were begun in 1400; and the enormous sum of 30,798 florins was contributed by the corporation of Gilders. The paintings in the Chapel of the Carmine by Masaccio and other celebrated artists were paid for by private citizens; and those of Angelico were executed by him under the inspiration of religious sentiment and a passion for the art, on many occasions without his wishing to receive any recompense.

The Medici, therefore, did not produce a state of things that was beyond the power of man to create; it was the necessary consequence of the vicissitudes the republic had passed through in the course of so many centuries; of the general destruction of liberty all over Italy. They found things prepared for them, and they had the rare sagacity to profit by them, to second them, and turn them to account. And, if ever there was a man of whom it might be said that he was born for that end, it was Lorenzo de' Medici. He had inherited from his grandfather Cosmo all that astuteness which, without being a great statesman, made him ever ready with subtle resources; he was prudent and acute; skilful in dealing with ambassadors; most able in getting rid of his enemies; bold and cruel, when the opportunity appeared to him to admit of either. He paid no regard either to honour or honesty, or to any condition of citizenship; and he went directly to his object, uncontrolled by any considerations, human or divine. The cruel sack of the unhappy city of Volterra; the funds pillaged

* Cosmo returned from exile in 1434; Lorenzo, as we have already said, did not begin to govern before 1469.

from the *Monte delle Fanciulle** by which many young women were deprived of their future means of subsistence, and were driven to a sinful course of life; the dishonest rapacity with which he laid hands on the property of the republic, are all stains which the most devoted of his worshippers have been unable to blot out.† His very countenance laid open his whole character: there was something sinister and unpleasant in it; his complexion was olive, his mouth wide, his nose flat, and his voice nasal; but his eyes were bright and penetrating, and he had a high forehead. In his manner he showed that degree of grace which we can imagine to have existed in an age of cultivation and refinement; his conversation was full of vivacity, and indicated both genius and accomplishment; and he charmed all whom he allowed to be on familiar terms with him. He encouraged all the tendencies of the age; it was already corrupt, and he made it more so, by providing appliances to that end; he abandoned himself to pleasures, and caused the people to be utterly lost in a similar abandonment; and by thus intoxicating them, he hoped to lull them to sleep. In his time, Florence became a scene of orgies, of pleasures, and of revellings.

Lorenzo, however, had an exquisite taste in poetry and art. Having ceased to engage in and brought ruin upon the commercial establishments of his House, he devoted his leisure hours to literature, in which he had been trained by the most learned men of the day. Landino was his instructor in poetry, Argiropalos in the Aristotelian philosophy, and Ficino in the Platonic. From his early years he gave evidence of an intellect capable of offering worship to the Muses; great facility in composition, precision in his mode of expressing him-

* See afterwards, for an explanation of this institution.—Tr.

† See Guicciardini, *Del Reggimento di Firenze*.

self, and a somewhat lively fancy. As he laid himself out to be a patron of the learned and of artists, his house became the resort of the men of greatest genius in his time. Every one in Florence who had acquired a reputation in literature was to be seen there; and many came from other parts of Italy to mix in that brilliant assemblage of learned men. And, whether in the meetings at his own house, or in the Platonic Academy, his genius displayed itself in that select circle, from which his own literary acquirements derived no small advantage.

Lorenzo was eulogised as one of the first authors of his day; his works were lauded to the sky; all that can now be said of them is, that they are not without some claim to celebrity. His popular poetry, and especially his tale *Dell' Ambra*, has a certain natural freedom, a spontaneous elegance, observation and feeling for natural objects, which were by no means common at that time. We too often perceive in them an imitation of the *Ottave* of Politian, but even then it is impossible to deny that in them Lorenzo displays the rare qualities of his mind. He was peculiarly the man of that century: but all the qualities of his mind might be traced to the intellect alone, his very manners were the result of study, and did not proceed from any kindliness of nature. His patronage of the learned was partly a means of governing, and partly a desire to pass his time pleasantly.

The life of Lorenzo certainly presents a most singular picture. After being engaged with all the powers of his mind to frame some new law by which he might destroy the last remains of liberty, after ordering some new confiscation of the property of a citizen, or condemning another to death,* he would go to the Platonic academy

* He who wishes it, will see in Sismondi the number of the citizens

and enter with eagerness into discussions on virtue and the immortality of the soul; and go from thence to join the society of young men of profligate habits, sing his own *Canti Carnascialeschi*; and plunge into the dissipation of wine and women. He would then return home, and at table with Pulci and Politian, would recite verses and discourse on poetry; and while engaged in these various occupations, he would give himself up for the time to each so entirely, as to make it seem as if it had been the sole object of his life. But the most singular fact of all in his character was this, that notwithstanding so diversified an existence, it is impossible to name one truly generous action performed towards his people, his intimate acquaintances, or his relations: if any such instance had occurred, his unwearied flatterers would not have failed to notice it. This is a sure sign of his bad disposition, and of the deplorable state of the times; for if virtue and justice had been held in the honour they deserved, he was not the man to fail to make some theatrical display of them in order to gain the reputation of possessing them.

Two men were his constant associates, who then enjoyed a high reputation in the whole of Europe, and who have transmitted their names to posterity. The first was Politian (Angelo Poliziano), a man of vast erudition in that most erudite age, and the only one in whose soul existed a true poetic vein. At thirteen years of age he composed most beautiful Latin epigrams, at seventeen he composed others in Greek, and he was little more than eighteen when he wrote the splendid poem on the tournament of Lorenzo and Giuliano, which marked him as the first poet of the age, and rendered his name immortal. It obtained for him the favour of

whom Lorenzo put to death for political reasons: the most of them were men of noble families. See also Guicciardini, *Reggimento di Firenze*, p. 43, and following.

Lorenzo, who made him his private secretary, librarian, the tutor of his children, and a constant resident in his palace. But in that new and luxurious life, the sacred flame of poetry appears to have been extinguished; his erudition alone increased, and in the course of time it became something quite extraordinary. Lorenzo derived no small advantage from the services and conversation of a man of such vast learning; but the fame of Politian has suffered much from that intimacy; for to that connection, in all probability, we may trace the strong charges brought against him by posterity—of vices so enormous, that history cannot record them without shame. The other intimate friend of Lorenzo was Luigi Pulci—a youth of noble family, the brother of two poets, whose names he has caused to be almost forgotten by his own famous *Morgante Maggiore*, a poem full of vivacity and strange fancies, in which, after an invocation of the Virgin comes one to Venus, followed by a satire on the immortality of the soul. As was the poem, so was the man—a whimsical and gay spirit, if ever there was one; a sceptic abounding in irony; devoted to pleasure and the intoxication of the senses; devoting himself body and soul to Lorenzo; his constant companion in his nocturnal gaieties—in all his indulgences, lawful and unlawful. It was on the suggestion of Lorenzo's own mother, Clara Orsini, that he wrote his poem, which he read at their table, while the wine circulated.

Besides the company of those two friends, Lorenzo passed much of his time in the society of artists, participated in their pleasures, and had a singular taste for their strange adventures and characters. He could not bestow upon them a patronage at all equal to that which Cosmo had done, who spent treasures in building churches and palaces; but he appears to have always given them a hearty welcome, and to have assisted them in the many

ways which a prince, such as he was, has power to do. And if he had done nothing else for the arts than founding the Gardens of St. Mark, he would have deserved the highest praise. He collected there all the statues and remains of antiquity which he had succeeded in obtaining, all the drawings of the most eminent artists, and made them freely accessible to every young man who gave any indication of genius. There the first attempts of Michael Angelo Buonarrotti were made, when still a youth, poor and little known, and there he experienced that hospitality which did Lorenzo so much honour.*

But we have not yet mentioned a man, who, more than any other may be said to have been almost created by the Medici. That man was Marsilio Ficino, at once the friend and instructor of Lorenzo, and at the head of the Platonic Academy; whose philosophical opinions found their way, at that time, all over the world; and as they modified, to a certain extent, those of Savonarola, we feel ourselves called upon to devote the next chapter to a somewhat minute exposition of them.

* While on this subject, we may mention a work recently published in England,—*The Life of Michael Angelo Buonarroti; also Memoirs of Savonarola, Raphael, and Vittoria Colonna*, by John S. Harford, in two volumes, London, 1851. This work contains many particulars relating to those times; but although the author professes to have political views different from those of Roscoe, he adopts his literary conclusions. He admits that Lorenzo was a tyrant, but would have him ranked among the greatest poets of the age, and the regenerator of the fine arts.

CHAPTER IV.

MARSILIO FICINO AND THE PLATONIC ACADEMY.

THE Council which was held in Florence in 1439, with the object of uniting the Greek and Latin Churches, proved of no advantage to religion, but greatly promoted the cause of literature. The Emperor sent men of great learning to represent the Eastern Church, who, speaking the language of Plato and Aristotle, at that time so much studied and admired, were sought after, held in respect, and almost courted.

Among them were the Aristotelians, Theodore Gaza, and Bessarion, the latter of whom was afterwards converted to the catholic faith ; but Georgius Gemistus was conspicuous above them all ; a man whose name has been unjustly forgotten by posterity, although, in his day, he was considered the most able of all the Greek philosophers. He might have been a contemporary of the ancient authors : for his writings were so admirable, that the most profound philologists could with difficulty distinguish between them and those of the best days of Greece ;* and his own admiration and profound

* No one could be a better judge of this than Giacomo Leopardi, who, in his *Discorso in Proposito di una Orazione Greca di G. G. Pletone, e Traduzione della medesima*, says : — ‘ His writings are composed ‘ with so much copiousness and power of language, so much soundness and ‘ force, in such a noble style, in language so pure and refined, that in ‘ reading them, one feels disposed to say that nothing is wanting in ‘ Gemistus to put him on a level with the great writers of Greece, with the ‘ ancients themselves, except his not having been one of them : such was

knowledge of the works of Plato procured for him the name of Georgius Gemistus Pletho. So great was his passion for the writings of the ancients, that speaking, as he often did, of an approaching reform of religion, when one teacher would give forth one doctrine for the whole human race, when all differences of religion would cease, he seemed by his words to have entertained the hope of a revival of the worship of the heathen deities. The work in which he expresses these ideas was, after a time, burned by his enemies. Besides the particulars respecting him which we obtain from his contemporaries, many fragments of his writings have recently been found and published:* he appears to have been in the habit of expressing his ideas very freely, both in speaking and writing.† But the times were such, that, although he gave a free utterance to his opinions, he was selected to support the rights of the Greek Church in the Council of Florence. Wherever he appeared he met with a cordial reception: the gravity of his manner, the vastness of his learning, the elegance of his writings, in which he seemed to embody the language of Plato himself, gave him an authority contested by no one. His Platonic convictions were however not calculated to meet with a general acceptance in Florence, where, at that time, Aristotle and Plato were read with equal avidity, without any one remarking, and almost without discovering, any philosophical difference between them. After having for so long a time studied Aristotle almost exclusively, through the medium of his Arabic commentators, the Italians, in the fifteenth century, became

‘he esteemed by the learned of his own nation in the age in which he lived.’

* Plethon, *Traité des Lois*, ou Recueil des Fragments, en partie inédits, de cet ouvrage, par C. Alexandre, traduction par A. Pelissier, Paris, 1858.

† This sentence and relative note, which are not in the original, have been supplied to the translator by the author.—Tr.

for the first time generally acquainted with the works of Aristotle and Plato in the original Greek. They passed from the one to the other without making any great distinction between them; difficulties of interpretation, and even in the language itself, occupied the learned; and a philosophical erudition had not as yet arisen; all disquisitions turned upon subjects of grammar and philology.*

Gemistus at once took the question into the field of philosophy, in his work *De Platonice atque Aristotelice Philosophiæ Differentiâ*,† in which, comparing the two systems, with much acuteness and penetration, he gives his judgements on all points in favour of that of Plato. This produced a great strife among the Greeks, who brought the Italians also into it; and there thus arose two parties of Aristotelians and Platonists, who attacked one another with a violence inconceivable in our days. Georgius Scolarius and Theodore Gaza, both Greeks and Aristotelians, were the first to reply to the work of Gemistus, and they did so with great violence.‡ Bessarion then took up the pen: he was the disciple of Gemistus, and he defended his master in an anonymous letter, in which he endeavoured to have the question discussed in terms of greater forbearance. But, unluckily, he let out that he considered Theodore Gaza more learned than

* Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura*. Bruckeri, *Historia Philosophiæ*, Lipsiæ, p. 43.

† Basilea, 1574. A copy exists in the Marucellian Library in Florence.

‡ Scalarius was also called *Gennadius*. His answer, in MS., is in the Imperial Library at Paris. The whole of that philosophical warfare is to be found minutely described in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, vol. ii. p. 715, *Querelles des Philosophes du XV. Siècle* par M. Boivin le Cadet. See also Bruckeri, *Historia Philosophiæ*, Lipsiæ, 1743, vol. iv. capp. 2, 3: Leonis Allatii, *De Georgiis et eorum Scriptis Diatriba* (he is speaking of Georgius Gemistus, Georgius Scolarius, and Georgius Trebisondinus, or Trapezunzio), in Alberti Fabricii, *Bibliotheca Græca*, vol. x. Hamburgi, 1721.

Trapezunzio,* another Greek, then also in Florence, who was a man of much violence and presumption, of coarse manners, and ready to pick a quarrel with any one. He entered at once into the controversy, with a violence which surprised every one.† He was an Aristotelian; but he attacked the supporters of Plato and Aristotle with equal rage; he designated them not *philosophos*, but *philotenebras*; casting invectives and scurrilities of all kinds upon them; and at length, not contented with having abused the living, he turned against the dead. Plato, according to him, was addicted to all sorts of vices—was a glutton, licentious, and given to indulgences of every kind—a man who had neither faith, dignity, nor honour. Language so devoid of decorum, decency, and truth, naturally disgusted all honourable men; and Trapezunzio was shunned and condemned by all. He paid no regard to this, but continued in the same temper, and passed the remainder of his life unhappily and commiserated by none.

In the meantime Bessarion had been engaged in preparing a great work, *In Calumniatorem Platonis*,‡ which was published when the controversy was at its height. After triumphantly defending that philosopher, he shows that the disagreement with Aristotle is neither so great nor so important as many would have it believed to be. The Hellenic Aristotle,§ he concluded, may be, and ought to be, held to agree with Plato; for the

* Known also by us as Giorgio da Trebisonda, from the country of his parents. He himself was born in Crete.

† *Comparationes Philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis*; Venet. 1523.

‡ He published two works; in one of them, Bessarionis Card. Sabini, Patriarchæ Constantinopolitani, *De Natura et Arte, adversus Georgium Trapezuntium Cretensem*, he narrates the whole story of the controversy; in the other, *In Calumniatorem Platonis*, he discusses the philosophical question at great length. In the handsome edition of this work, in folio (Venetiis, in Ædibus Aldi et Andreae Soceri, MDXVI.), the first of the above works is added, as the last book of the second work.

§ The *Aristotle* of the original Greek edition was so called merely to distinguish the work from the translations and commentaries.

Alexandrians so considered him, and the Italians of the fifteenth century might and ought to follow their example. Thus some order and decorum was restored to the discussions; and, at length, that philosophy became triumphant in Florence, which, although termed Platonic, was more properly Neo-platonic or Alexandrian. The tradition of it had continued to survive in Greece; its latest supporters came to Italy and brought it with them.

But the most remarkable circumstance in that philosophical conflict was the point on which the whole question turned. Gemistus maintained that Plato and Aristotle agree that nature operates with a determinate object, but that Plato considers nature to act advisedly (*consulto agit*), that in her there is a spirit, an essence, conscious of the object aimed at; whereas Aristotle compares her to a workman, who, having once learned his art, follows it instinctively (*non consulto*), although he always keeps to the determinate end. Gemistus points out in this the great superiority of the Platonic conception. Nature, he says, is the art of God, immeasurably superior to that of man; in the former, the hand and the Divine guide are always combined; and if man sometimes acts by habit, God ever acts by supreme reason. The question, although expressed in a dry and indistinct form, is nevertheless of fundamental importance. It amounts to this, — whether nature in her operations is guided by reason, or whether her acts are the result of chance; if she is the manifestation of a divine and universal spirit which animates and regulates the universe, or the blind effect of laws to which matter is subject. Pletho then, in the fifteenth century, had not only transferred Italian erudition into the field of philosophy, but he also fixed it there as a point of vital importance, a proof that he possessed profound philosophical penetration. Nor was it less remarkable that

these learned men saw its importance so quickly, and contested the ground with so much ardour.*

When Gemistus perceived the ardour with which Bessarion maintained the Platonic idea, and knew that it had triumphed in Florence, he abstained from further discussion, and sought, instead, a more effective mode of diffusing it, and of rendering it permanent. He had a singular art of exciting in others that admiration and almost worship of Plato which he himself felt; and he sought the acquaintance of Cosmo de' Medici. After many arguments, which Cosmo listened to with great attention, he succeeded in inspiring the merchant prince with a like enthusiasm. So soon as he perceived that the idea had taken root, he advanced a step farther, and communicated to Cosmo a thought he had long cherished, that the Academy which had conferred so much honour on Greece, and had proved so useful in spreading the Platonic philosophy, might be revived in Florence.† Cosmo was pleased with the idea, soon resolved to patronise the scheme, and made up his mind to carry it into effect. Such was the origin of that *Accademia Platonica*, which had no small influence on the destiny of philosophy in that century.

Secure, by this means, of the triumph of his doctrine, Gemistus returned to Peloponnesus, and passed the few remaining years of his life in tranquillity; which, however, his enemies tried to disturb, for the same Scolarius, who had been among the first to give him battle in Florence, had become Patriarch of Constantinople, and continued the war with fierceness. He persecuted him,

* Gemisti Pletonis, *De Platonice atque Aristotelicæ Philosophiæ Differentia*: Bessarionis, *In Calumniatorem Platonis*: Trapezuntii, *Comparationes Philosophorum Aristotelis et Platonis*.

† The origin of the Academy described by Ficino in the dedicatory letter prefixed to his Latin translation of Plotinus. See Ficini, *Opera*, Basilea, 1576, vol. ii. folio, p. 1320.

while still alive, with accusations of heresy and infidelity; and, after his death, sought by every means in his power to fix a stain upon his memory: he even burned several of his works, which were thus irretrievably lost.* Pletho, however, left behind him in Italy not only a great name, but he had been so much beloved, that, twenty years after his death, Pandolfo Malatesta, the lord of Rimini, had his ashes sought for and conveyed to that city, where they were honourably entombed. The decay among us of Greek studies has had the effect of obliterating the fame of that philosopher; but whoever reads the history of the period will find that he was always considered to have been the first to introduce the Platonic philosophy into Italy, and was thus one of the men most deserving of being honoured in our country.†

When Gemistus left Italy, Cosmo perceived that the Platonic Academy was not flourishing, from the want of some person to take the direction of it and be its animating spirit. He thought that such an one might be found in some young man known to him, of whose future eminence the highest expectations had been formed. This was

* Among them, the work *De Legibus*, in which his religious opinions were made known. Some fragments of that work have recently been discovered. See note, p. 53.

† Giacomo Leopardi, in the *Discorso* above quoted, thus vindicates his name:—‘Fame is at present silent respecting Giorgio Gemisto Pletone, ‘of Constantinople; but for no other reason than this, that celebrity—we ‘may say, like every other thing—depends more upon chance than reason. ‘. . . Certain it is that Gemisto is to be reckoned among the greatest ‘geniuses, and the most in advance of his time, to be found among the ‘men of the fifteenth century. While living, he was honoured in his ‘native country; and when he found that he had outlived that land and ‘the name of a Greek (or, as he said, Roman), he was welcomed and held ‘dear in Italy. He had a most splendid reputation in the land he had ‘adopted, and no less so in other parts of Europe, wherever letters were ‘held in honour.’ It is singular that Leopardi, learned as he was in Greek affairs, and so exact in all he says, should have fallen into the mistake of making Gemistus come to Italy after the fall of Constantinople, his death having occurred in 1451; that is, two years before the capture of the city.

Marsilio Ficino, the son of his physician, born in 1433, who had received that assistance and encouragement from Cosmo, without which he would not have been able to devote himself to the study of philosophy. He was deeply immersed in the works of Plato, and, at a very early age, had written many voluminous treatises upon his philosophy.* After he had made a greater advance in the study of Greek, he, with indefatigable industry, translated and wrote commentaries upon several parts of the works: his translation is the best that Italy possesses, notwithstanding the progress that has been made in Greek philosophy since his time.† His worship of that philosopher went on increasing to such an extent, that, although a Canon of the church of St. Lorenzo, and a reviver of Christian philosophy, people believed that he had a lamp burning before an image of Plato. He extended his studies over the whole field of ancient literature, and there was no philosophical writer into whose work he had not eagerly dived. He read, with unwearied zeal, Aristotelians, Platonists, and Alexandrians; he searched for remains of Confucius and Zoroaster; and plunged into the book of Genesis; passing, without appearing to have been aware of it, from one age into another, from one system into another: so that a work belonged to antiquity it was sure to attract his interest. In that age, the learned for some time had been in the habit of swearing by Aristotle; and

* At a more advanced age he committed those treatises to the flames.

† 'He supported his philosophy by a translation of Plato into Latin, executed at the direction of Lorenzo, and printed before 1490. Of this translation Buhle has said, that it has been very unjustly reproached with want of correctness; it is, on the contrary, perfectly conformable to the original, and has even, in some passages, enabled us to restore the text; the manuscripts used by Ficinus, I presume, not being in our hands. It has also the rare merit of being at once literal, perspicuous, and in good Latin.' — Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. i., p. 273; who quotes Buhle, *Hist. de la Philosophie*. — TR.

they now placed implicit faith in whatever belonged to antiquity. This, however, was a considerable step in advance, and it was not difficult to see, in the controversy going on between the Aristotelians and the Platonists, that at no distant day the triumph of reason might be expected.* But before this conquest could be made, philosophy had still to pass through a course of study of all antiquity; and not until that had been accomplished could it obtain a consciousness of its independence.

This fever of study took such entire hold of Ficino that he became, as it were, a living dictionary of the ancient philosophy. He was, moreover, not unacquainted with the natural sciences and medicine, to which last his father had wished to direct his attention in early life. He had not, however, acquired thereby the habits of experiment and observation; and to prove a truth, neither his own reason, nor the whole of nature, nor human consciousness, were to him sufficient; he could not rest contented unless he found a confirmation of it in some passage of Plato or other ancient author, whether sceptic or materialist.

A small work of minor importance, which Ficino wrote, *Sulla Religione Cristiana*, will serve better than any other, perhaps, to represent that strange medley of ideas which had so taken possession of his mind.† When he would prove the truth of the doctrines of Christ, the divinity of His mission, he thus

* Gibbon, in his *Decline and Fall*, &c., observes with great acumen:—‘So equal, yet so opposite, are the merits of Plato and Aristotle, that they may be balanced in endless controversy; but some spark of freedom may be produced by the collision of adverse servitude.’ The whole of the concluding part of the 60th chapter of that work, is full of important remarks upon the characters and learning of the Greeks, who passed over into Italy. See also Meier, *Savonarola*, &c. zweit. Kap.: Überblick des wissenschaftlichen und politischen Lebens im Florenz, unter den Mediceern.

† *Della Religione Cristiana*, in Fiorenza, presso i Giusti, 1568.

begins : — ‘The advent of Christ had been many times prophesied by the Sibyls: the celebrated verses in Virgil are known by all; Plato being once asked how long he expected the precepts of his philosophy would last, replied, “Until the coming of Him who will open the fountain of all truth;” and Porphyry says in his responses, “The Gods had declared Christ to be eminently pious and religious, and had affirmed that he had been immortal, *testifying of him most benignly.*”’ On such arguments as these he rests the whole work. According to him, in order to prove the truth of Christianity, it was necessary to have the testimony of the Sibyls, of Virgil, and of Plato, and to be assured by Porphyry that the Gods had benignly borne witness in favour of Jesus Christ! Such was the state of mind, and such were the studies of Marsilio Ficino. The universal admiration awakened throughout Europe by the discovery of the treasures of ancient learning may be said to have centered in his person, and to have so subjugated his mind as to render him incapable of receiving a ray of any other light. He confessed to his friends, with great ingenuousness, that when the idea first occurred to him to write his great work, the *Theologia Platonica*, he wished to impart to it a sense entirely pagan, and that it was only after mature consideration that he had been led to give it that of Christianity.*

This is Ficino’s principal work; † his object having been to bring together all his doctrinal views, to give them consistency, and a systematic form. But whoever may expect to find in it a true philosophical unity would be much disappointed; it was wholly wanting in the mind of the author, all whose writings are in the form

* Bruckeri, *Hist. &c.; Marsilii Ficini Vita*, auctore Johanne Corsio, publicata da Ang. Mar. Bandini.

† Marsilii Ficini, *Opera*; Basilea, vol. ii. in folio.

of a lengthy dissertation, in which a multitude of secondary ideas, borrowed from an infinite number of different authors, are perpetually interrupting and confusing the main idea. There is no scientific unity, no consecutive reasoning, not even that elegance of style which one would certainly have expected to find in an author who had spent his whole life in the study of the writers of Greece. So true it is that elegance depends upon clearness and precision of ideas, upon a natural taste, and upon that spontaneous free expression of thought which was altogether stifled in Ficino.

Nevertheless, in the history of all the sciences, and especially in that of philosophy, we discover that there exists a certain unity, a life, which belongs more to the science itself than to its cultivators, which goes steadily forward, and makes its way in spite of individual interferences, in spite of obstacles of all kinds. The combats of the Platonists and Aristotelians had already restricted philosophy to a question of principle with which Ficino was obliged to make his ideas agree; and thus, almost without his being aware of it, he attained some degree of unity and systematic order. The question then put by all philosophers was, in what manner does nature operate? not because they were conscious of its importance, but because it had been given out as the subject of the great contest. Although a Platonist, Ficino would have desired to find both parties right or to remain silent; but this last course was not possible, for he saw that an obligation lay upon him to reason upon and discuss the subject in all its parts. Thus in his *Theologica Platonica* there is a fundamental problem around which he gathers all the other.

Nature—he thus expresses himself—is animated by an infinite number of souls; land, water, plants, the stars, light, have each a *third essence* (*terza essenza*), or, as it were, their special soul. These souls

are all rational and immortal, but inseparable from the bodies; they keep nature ever in action in passing from one transformation into another; by them water spontaneously generates animals, the land perpetually brings forth flowers, the stars move with perfect order, and all nature is under the guidance of eternal reason. But do these same souls correspond with *the idea* of Plato, or with *the form* of Aristotle? To both, replied Ficino. According to Plato, bodies exist in so far as they correspond to an idea; according to Aristotle, in so far as they are possessed of a form. Aristotle recognises in everything a primary general form, which again predominates in all subordinate forms. This does not differ fundamentally from the Platonic idea, and is almost identical with the rational soul, or *third essence*. Such, therefore, is the way by which Ficino tries to bring Plato and Aristotle into harmony with one another.

This infinite number of souls, or *third essences*, he divides into twelve orders, according to the twelve signs of the zodiac; they have a mutual correspondence with each other, and they are all reflected in the mind of man; and thus he is the microcosm of the creation. Thus it happens, that all the souls of nature may act upon that of man, because they find in him a corresponding nature; and, in this way, we perceive the influence of the stars. If the planet Mars, in a certain position, can exercise an influence upon a man, it is because the martial spirit, which it calls into vigour, already existed in him. If a stone or a blade of grass awakens in us one passion and extinguishes another, it is because the soul of the stone or of the grass finds in ours the corresponding or the antagonistic passion. Thus Ficino, with all his philosophy, assented to the prejudices of the age in which he lived—prejudices from which he himself was not exempt. In fact, he ascribed

his habitual melancholy to the influence of Saturn;* he always carried amulets about his person, which he continually changed according to the state of his mind; and in his book *De Vitâ cœlitus comparandâ*,† he brought out a treatise upon the influences of the stars, of stones, and of animals, together with long discourses on the occult virtues of agates, topazes, the teeth of vipers, the claws of lions, and so forth.

Nor was this a peculiarity existing in Ficino alone, but, as we have already said, it was characteristic of that century, in which such convictions began to acquire new vigour, and became from day to day more general. Whether the Greeks received them from the East, or whether minds were thus strangely disposed for their reception by the absence, at that time, of all sound faith, of all true science, it is certain, that the most earnest thinkers of that period were under their influence, and, having neither the power nor the courage to think for themselves, ran eagerly after such phantoms. Alchemy, judicial astrology, and all the occult sciences, were propagated anew in the universities and public resorts; all nature seemed to be full of occult powers, of mysterious spirits that held converse with mortals; presentiments of strange events, of great changes, and of great misfortunes, were common among all men, but especially among Italians. Many also spoke of great changes and reforms in religion that were about to take place. We have seen that Pletho expected the coming triumph of the gods of antiquity. The grave and learned Landino drew the horoscope of religion, and argued, from the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, that on the 25th of November 1484, a great reform of the Christian religion would take place.*

* Ficini, *Epistolæ*, lib. iii. .

† Lugduni, 1567, and the principal part of his work, *De Vita*.

† *Commento alla Divina Commedia*; Firenze, per Niccolo de la Magna,

It was an age of doubt and superstition, of indifference and wild exaltation. The Italian people would not rise in defence of their country, but would face a thousand dangers to discover a manuscript; they doubted the existence of a God, and believed in that of spirits. Niccolò Machiavelli, in fact, thought 'the air we breathe to be full of spirits, which in compassion to mortals forewarned them by sinister omens of the evils about to come to pass.'* And Francesco Guicciardini, at a later period, goes so far as to say, 'Aerial spirits exist which hold familiar converse with men, for I have had practical experience of this, in cases that makes it appear most certain.'† Marsilio Ficino, therefore, did no more than bring forward antiquity to support the strange credulity of the age; and the neo-platonic philosophy marvellously accorded with it.

According to Ficino, we have to distinguish two souls in man, one the sensitive soul, or the *third essence* of the body, which is inseparable from it, and which, after death, is subject to the eternal transformations of matter; the other the intellectual soul, which is a divine existence, breathed into man by the Creator. This constitutes our high and universal nature, is the microcosm of creation, and is in harmony with all souls; so that, while it is drawn into earthly cares, is subject to passions, and is full of trouble and misery, yet rises to the contemplation of heavenly things, can see beyond the present, predict the future, and, in an ecstatic state, can arrive at the blessed vision of Deity. This vision, granted to Plotinus and Porphyry, is the highest felicity given to man to enjoy on this earth,

1481. See in particular the place where he interprets the *Veltro Allegorico*. It is singular that Luther was born in the very month of November of 1483 or 1484, a doubt existing as to which year.

* *Discorsi*, lib. i. cap. lvi.

† *Ricordi politici e civili*, ricordo cexi.

and figures to us that blessedness which awaits us in heaven. But what, according to Ficino, is the Supreme Being? It is *Unity*. Perfection, according to him and the neo-platonists, is no other than *The One*; and, as God is essentially *One*, it follows that He is the Unity itself. It may also be said that God is *Mind*; but then it would be necessary to say that in Him mind is soul and body at the same time. The Creator, then, could not condescend to come in contact with nature, and has surrounded his throne with angels, who are immortal and intellectual beings, by whom all the *third essences* were created, which are confided to their care. There thus emanates from the Supreme Being an infinite series of souls, some of which are mutually created and governed. It was the will of God that He alone should pour into man the divine breath; it was His will that man should be the work of His hands, and be made after His own image. For which reason, Ficino concludes, there is in the human mind a central point, where the sublime contact between the creature and the Creator exists. *

Such, in substance, was the doctrine of Ficino, an imitation of the neo-platonic—a fusion, so to speak, of all antiquity and of the Alexandrian school; void of all originality, void of any organic unity. In spite of all this, the science has advanced, and Ficino has unconsciously contributed to its progress. When he said, the sea has a *third essence* peculiar to itself, rivers another, stones another, and so forth; that there is a more general *third essence*, which is the soul of the whole of our planet, as in everything there is a form, to which all others are subordinate, he then, unperceived by himself, led the way to the first independent and original philosophy which Italy possessed. What, in

* This account of the doctrine of Ficino is chiefly taken from his *Theologia Platonica*. See Ficini, *Opera*.

truth, did Giordano Bruno accomplish, when, on the wings of a new philosophy, he took that bold and sublime flight which was afterwards to prove fatal to him? Nothing more than to unite all the souls of Ficino in one. This, he said, is the soul of the world—it is mind, soul, and body all co-existing; it is God and nature at the same time, manifesting itself by infinite ways and in infinite worlds, knowing neither time nor space; in it exists the harmony of opposed terms. Thus Bruno, having discovered this new and higher Unity, gave himself up to the living force of his own genius, broke through the servile traditions of the Platonic school, and, full of heroic impetuosity, forced his way into the free expanse of science, where his star shines for ever. But Bruno lived a century later than Ficino, who never dreamt that he was clearing the way for so sublime a genius, who would declare war against that antiquity he so much adored, and to which he had devoted his whole existence.

In addition to the two great works, the translation of Plato and the *Theologia Platonica*, Ficino made an infinite number of translations of the Alexandrian authors, of tracts, letters, and orations; he gave public lectures in the Florentine school; was the instructor of Cosmo, of his son Piero, and his grandson Lorenzo; and was the soul of the new Academy, which at last began to flourish under his care, to the great satisfaction of its patrons, and with universal approbation.

When, in process of time, Lorenzo honoured it with his presence, and took part in the discussions, it attracted many more of the learned, and all were eager for the honour of being admitted into it. The dialogues of Plato were read, and some of the members personified the speakers, commenting and defending. Long Latin orations were delivered, in which there was always a triumph for the vast learning of Ficino; and the varied

and ready genius of Lorenzo met with applause. On the 29th of November, the anniversary of the birth and death of Plato, and in imitation of an ancient solemn custom among the Platonists, the day was observed in the Academy as a religious festival; the bust of the philosopher, crowned with laurel, was placed in a conspicuous position, and was hailed with adulatory addresses and hymns, some carrying their fanaticism so far as to propose that a request should be made to the Pope that Plato might be canonised.*

Few can imagine the importance attached by the learned to this assembly, and the honours derived from it to Ficino, the Medici, and Florence itself. That city became a centre for the scholars of Italy; students flocked to it from Germany, France, and Spain, to attend the public lectures of Ficino; his writings were eagerly read in every part of Europe; his merits and his defects, his truths and his errors, all contributed to make him popular. The learned men of Florence and in other parts of Italy then created an advanced state of civilisation; everywhere universities flourished, lecture-rooms were crowded, and an incredible activity in studies prevailed. The Latin language, so generally spoken, the printing-press, by which books were then multiplied, and rapidly spread new ideas over the world, all contributed to bring men in closer contact with each other, to awaken in the human race the consciousness of their unity, and to give rise to that sentiment of universal brotherhood which one day, perhaps, will be the triumph of Christianity. It was, in fact, the beginning of modern

* Numerous authors mention the Academy. Ficino himself often speaks of it in his letters and works. See also, *Ficini Vita*, auctore Corsio. It is commented upon in almost all the histories of literature and philosophy in Italy; so also Fabroni, Gibbon, and Roscoe: and, latterly, Mr. Harford has devoted some pages to the *Accademia Platonica*, in his work already quoted, which, without adding anything new, has the merit of not being a mere repetition of Roscoe and Tiraboschi.

civilisation, and Italy led the way in that great movement—was the school, the instructress, to all the nations of Europe, the civiliser of the world; but Europe made her a sad recompense for the benefits received. The learned men, the scholars, the servile imitators of the ancients, and Lorenzo himself, without either knowing or desiring such a result, became instruments in the hand of God for the accomplishment of the great work, the great revival of civilisation, the victory of liberty and of thought.

CHAPTER V.

HIS FIRST RESIDENCE IN TUSCANY—VISITS LOMBARDY—
RETURNS TO FLORENCE.

[1482—1490.]

A FEW days after his arrival in Florence, Savonarola again found himself an isolated being. When he became more intimately acquainted with some of the citizens, he soon perceived that, with all their high mental cultivation, there prevailed among them a settled scepticism, an habitual sarcastic humour. This general absence of principle and faith led him to return to his former contemplative life; and his disgust was the greater because of the high hopes he had conceived on his coming to Florence. He found in the monks of St. Mark themselves no true religion; the name of Saint Antonino was constantly in their mouths, but it was evidently uttered more in the spirit of vain-glory than of love. Most of all, he scorned their vaunted studies. It was something new and painful to him to find them discussing with warmth the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, while not caring, or, at all events, not perceiving, how much party spirit and eagerness of discussion led them to depart from the very principles of the religion they professed. In consequence of this, he then began to foster a certain degree of scorn, almost of contempt, for all erudition, literature, and philosophy—a feeling which became daily stronger, and even sometimes led him to speak disparagingly of

that very philosophy to which he had devoted so many years of study, on which he had expended so much labour, and with which he had become so thoroughly imbued.

Nor was it probable that the Florentines, in the long run, would show any sympathy for him ; so different and irreconcilable was their nature from that of the newly-arrived friar. In him all emanated from the heart ; his inmost thoughts were dictated by its generous warmth. His manners and language were uncouth and negligent ; his pronunciation harsh ; he made use of vulgar expressions, and his gesticulations were impetuous, almost violent. The Florentines were accustomed to find in their preachers a certain measured study in gestures, words, and sentences—an unmistakeable imitation of the ancient authors, and frequent quotations from them ; as to the sense of the matter, they did not make much account of that ; and the passages they applauded very often indicated the shallowness of their belief. When Savonarola preached, he launched forth vehemently against vices, and the want of religion in the clergy and laity ; spoke disrespectfully of poets and philosophers, condemned as absurd the fanaticism for ancient authors, and never quoted any other book than the Bible. Few in Florence had any desire to read the Bible, because the Latin was incorrect, and they feared to have their style corrupted.*

It thus happened that in the church of San Lorenzo, where Savonarola preached in 1483, there never were more than five-and-twenty persons to listen to him ; whereas, in that of Santo Spirito, where a certain Mariano de Gennezzano preached, the church was not large enough to hold the crowd that flocked to it. That

* Cardinal Bembo wrote to Saldoletto: 'Do not read St. Paul's Epistles, that such a barbarous style may not corrupt your taste; leave alone those idle tales, which are unworthy of a man of grave habits.'

monk was a favourite of the Medici, who had built a convent for him outside the Porta San Gallo, which Lorenzo the Magnificent, who always wished to pass for a person of universal knowledge, was in the habit of visiting frequently to hold disputations on theology. Gennezzano had acquired great celebrity in Florence, especially among the literati about the Court, who ran after his sermons, praising him everywhere. In a very beautiful letter, Politian describes with much eloquence the merits of this orator; but he is evidently unconscious that in his praises he exposes the defects both of the preacher and of his hearers. In a letter to his friend Tristano Calco, he thus expresses himself: ‘I went to hear him, not very much predisposed in his favour, because the great praises I had heard bestowed upon him made me distrustful; but I had scarcely entered the church, when the dress, the countenance, and figure of the man wrought a change in me, and I expected to hear immediately something striking. I confess to you that he seemed to me to rise in the pulpit in giant form above human stature. And when he began to speak, I became wholly absorbed by the sonorous voice, the choice language, the noble sentences. I marked the periods and the pauses, and was subdued by the harmonious cadences, &c.’* Such are the words of a man of the great learning and taste of Politian, dwelling especially on choice language and the cadence of sentences! Posterity has forgotten the very name of Gennezzano;†

* *Politianæ Epistolæ*, Lugduni, 1533, vol. ii. See letter to Tristano Calco, written in April 1489, vol. i. p. 116. This letter is quoted by Villemain (*Cours de Littér., au Moyen-âge*), and also by Guizot, but with an obvious error, they apply to Savonarola what Politian says of Gennezzano, expressly naming him from the beginning of the letter. See also Niccolò Valori, *Vita Laurentii Medicis*. Quetif also, in his 2nd vol., makes similar remarks on Gennezzano.

† We are not aware of any collection of his sermons, either in print or manuscript. There is mention made of a sermon he preached before Innocent VIII., which was printed at Rome, but it has become very rare.

but his contemporaries lauded him to the skies, and Savonarola was then held to be vanquished by a rival such as this! Girolamo Benivieni, who had then become a follower of Savonarola, said to him, 'My good father, it cannot be denied that your doctrine is true, useful, and necessary; but your manner of bringing it forth is wanting in grace—especially, contrasted as it is daily with that of Father Mariano.' To this Savonarola replied, 'Elegance of language must give way before simplicity in preaching sound doctrine.'* But whatever change may have afterwards taken place, it is certain that at that time the numbers of those who flocked to hear the sermons of Gennezzano increased daily. He was very studied in his sentences, language, and action; he recited passages of Latin and Greek poetry gracefully, and constantly quoted Aristotle and Plato. He imitated in his sermons the orations of Ficino in the Platonic Academy, which were considered as models of eloquence; not unfrequently he told anecdotes which excited the risibility of the congregation, and he always availed himself of whatever was likely to add to the number of his hearers.

The triumph of such a rival was certainly not calculated to make Savonarola feel in any degree humiliated; but he who knows with what tribulations the first steps in life are beset, what uncertainties have to be struggled with before self-confidence can be firmly rooted, and how necessary it is for an orator to have the sympathy of his audience, will readily believe that Savonarola could not be indifferent to the coldness with which he was listened to. It seemed as if he were stopped at the very threshold of the path he had entered upon, that the course indispensably necessary to his existence was closed

A copy of it is in the Vatican — at least, it is quoted in the catalogues; but, in spite of many searches, we could not find it.

* Letter of Girolamo Benivieni to Clement VII., in defence of the doctrine and prophecies of Savonarola. MS. Riccardiano, cod. 2022.

against him. For a while he thought of giving up preaching, and of confining himself to lecturing; but soon his natural energy returned with increased vigour, and he resolved to fulminate with all his might against the vices of the slumbering people, and rouse them from their lethargy.

His imagination, which had always been excitable, became more and more exalted. Instead of his ideas moderating, they acquired fresh vigour. The coldness and indifference of the people convinced him of the necessity of his divine mission: the histories of the prophets of old recurred to his thoughts, and reminded him that they had to contend with the ingratitude of the Hebrew people. The similitude inspired him with fresh courage, and added strength to the conviction that he was about to engage in a fierce war against the vices of the time, against the scandalous deeds in Rome—a war which he considered to be an ordinance of the Almighty. In his prayers and contemplations, in the ecstatic state into which he was often worked up, he expected a direct vision from God, a vision which the philosophy of Ficino had made him believe would be manifested by an inward consciousness; and this ardent desire ended in a conviction that his prayer had been heard.

In this strangely excited state of mind, it is not to be wondered at if many and various visions began to appear before him. One day, as he was conversing with a brother monk, the heavens seemed to open all at once, and place before his eyes the future calamities of the Church, and a voice commanded him to declare them in the face of the people.* He from that moment felt

* See his printed trial. There are two copies of his trial: one of them is that printed in the fifteenth century, and afterwards by Baluzio; the other we ourselves discovered, and shall have occasion to mention at some length. See also Padre Marchese, p. 118; Burlamacchi; Fra Benedetto, &c.

convinced of his divine mission: he held it to be the highest duty of his life, and his only thought was how he should be able to fulfil that duty. He longed for a voice that would resound to the ends of the earth, to cry to all nations, ‘Repent, and return to the Lord.’ The visions in the Old Testament and in the Revelations were arrayed before his fancy as realities; they figured to him the misfortunes of Italy and of the Church, and appeared symbolical of the future regeneration to be effected through him. He heard voices on all sides calling upon him to continue in the path on which he had entered, not to suffer himself to be subdued by his labours, nor to be disheartened by the indifference of the people of Florence.

In this year, Sixtus IV. died; and, while many were hoping that a new Pope would bring some relief from the many evils that oppressed the Church, rumours were heard of dissensions in the Conclave being so great as to threaten a schism. On that occasion Savonarola composed a poem, in which, addressing Jesus Christ, he said,—

Deh! mira con pietade in che procella
Si trova la tua sposa,
E quanto sangue, oimè! tra noi s’aspetta,
Se la tua man pietosa,
Che di perdonar sempre si diletta,
Non la riduce a quella
Pace che fu quando era poverella. *

Ah! look with pity on thy bride,
Amidst the storms of life,
What blood must flow, unless with might
Thy hand shall stay the strife.
Thou who in pardon always dost delight,
Let not thy handmaid be reduced once more
To silence, as in her poverty in days of yore.

The choice made dispelled the hopes of all good men. Instances of the scandalous bribery of the cardinals were

* ‘Song of Praise composed in the year 1484;’ Poesia viii., in the Florentine edition.

spread over all Italy. The names and the prices of all those who had sold their votes became known. INNOCENT VIII. had scarcely mounted the papal throne than he brought matters to such a pass, that, contrary to all that imagination could conceive to be possible, men began to long for a return of the time of Sixtus IV.! INNOCENT no longer gave the objects of his affection the designation of nephews, but at once called them pontifical princes, openly avowing that they were his sons. He was not only a father of children, and a profligate father, but indulged to such a degree in all kinds of vices, that the Court of Rome became a shelter for every kind of lust and abomination. Such a state of things, threatening the destruction of religion, and bringing dishonour on human nature, caused a general alarm; people knew not what was to become of society with such a succession of Popes, each becoming worse than his predecessor. When Sixtus died, it was thought that matters must surely improve; but all hopes, all confidence in the future vanished. If such a state of things caused so great indignation in a corrupt people, what must have been their effect on a mind like that of Savonarola? It is more easy to imagine than to describe the tempest which then raged in his bosom.

Fortunately, he was sent to preach, during Lent, in 1484-5,* at San Geminiano, a small community situated among the mountains near Siena. It was not then the poor deserted spot it now is. The monuments and the lofty towers which are seen in the distance by the traveller in Tuscany, and churches adorned by the charming productions of Ghirlandaio, still testify that Geminiano was once a flourishing seat of civilised life

* Respecting the chronology of the life of Savonarola, we must not omit to do due honour to Padre Marchese, who, in his *History of St. Mark*, has settled it after much research, and has corrected not a few of the errors into which former biographers had fallen.

and art. If its inhabitants had not the refined manners of Florence, neither had the simplicity of their hearts been corrupted by misdirected study and sophisms; their ideas were not embodied in fine sentences, nor did they, like Politian, value their preachers for their skilful periods and for harmonious cadences in language. They inhabited a smiling land; the season of spring there is heavenly; and the calm, extensive, peaceful horizon seen from their hills, gives altogether an enjoyment of nature that elevates man to the contemplation of the Creator.

Amid the towers of San Geminiano the voice of Savonarola was echoed with more effect, and he was conscious of being more master of himself; he for the first time gave utterance to those ideas which he had long cherished, and pronounced those words which were to become his war-cry, and be on the banner he was to unfurl during the rest of his life: 'The Church will be scourged, then regenerated, and this quickly.' At the same time, he warns us that he did not represent those declarations to be a divine revelation, because the people he was addressing were not yet ripe for such a communication; but he founded them upon the authority of the Bible, and upon natural reason.*

The history of the Hebrew people is, in fact, a continued succession of sins and punishments, and therefore Savonarola found in it numberless arguments to prove that the general corruption of the Church would inevitably draw down upon it the anger of God, and his consequent punishments. These arguments he expounded with the greater force inasmuch as they had first suggested those ideas which afterwards took the

* In the *Compendium Revelationum*, and in his sermons in 1497 and 1498, the account of his preaching at Geminiano is often described. See also his Trial; the Letter of Benivieni; Burlamacchi; Fra Benedetto, &c.

form of real existences, as reflections of the Divine mind, and which consequently had penetrated deeply into his very soul.* On all occasions when he denounced the corruption of morals and foretold future punishments he felt his courage rise; his language became more free, more effective and eloquent; the attention of the people was roused, and he carried his auditory along with him. At San Geminiano, therefore, he found again his own road; he perceived there that the sad forebodings by which he was himself oppressed were equally hidden in the hearts of his hearers, and that, in boldly announcing the punishments that would come to pass, he had, as it were, revealed to the Italian people the secrets in their own breasts, and he met with a general echo of his own feelings. He therefore returned to Florence in a more tranquil state of mind, and with more self-confidence: but, at the same time that he had become strengthened in his principles, he grew more cautious by experience, more wary, more prudent in addressing a people who were sunk in such a state of indifference.

He resumed the quiet occupation of a lecturer until the end of 1486, when he was sent to preach in different cities of Lombardy, and chiefly at Brescia. He there gave an exposition of the Book of Revelation. His language was very earnest, his manner commanding, and he spoke with a voice of thunder; he charged the people with their sins, arraigned the whole of Italy, and threatened all with the wrath of God. He figured to them the twenty-four elders, and imagined one of them rising to declare the future calamities of the Brescian people—that the

* See Jo. Francisci Pici, *Vita, &c.* In the fifth chapter of that biography there is a minute account how Savonarola had found in the Bible the first grounds of his convictions of the punishments awaiting Italy and the Church.

city would become the prey of furious enemies, and would see rivers of blood flowing through her streets; that wives would be torn from their husbands, and virgins violated; that children would be murdered before the faces of their mothers; that the whole surrounding country would be in a state of terror at the sight of blood and conflagration. He concluded his discourse with an exhortation to all to repent, for the Lord would have mercy on the good. The mystical image of the elders made a deep impression on the people: the voice of the preacher seemed to them to resound as from another world, and his threatenings struck them with terror. When, in the year 1512, the city was unable to resist the ferocious soldiers of Gaston de Foix, when nearly six thousand persons were slaughtered in the streets, the Brescians called to mind the Elders of the Apocalypse and the preacher of Ferrara.*

The success of those Lent sermons first began to spread the name of Savonarola in Italy, and proved to be the turning point in the history of his life, for from that day all doubt as to his mission vanished from his

* Pico, Burlamacchi, Marchese, &c. See also Barsanti, *Della Storia del Padre Girolamo Savonarola de Ferrara*, Livorno, 1787. This biography, which was published without the name of the author, is made up from those of Burlamacchi and Pico; it is nevertheless valuable, because it contains many extracts from the Diaries (*Giornate*), of Lorenzo Violi, an important, but lost manuscript. It appears that in Barsanti's time, it was in the possession of the Sisters of St. Catherine, had been sold not many years ago to the bookseller Molini, and again sold by him, probably to some Englishman; and thus all trace of it has been lost.¹ We may here also quote a biography written by Razzi, another compilation, but of minor importance, which exists in MS. in several libraries. Razzi has collected many apologetic writings regarding Savonarola, and has left a somewhat full compendium of all the *Giornate* of Violi. See Cod. Riccard., 2012.

¹ After this note had been printed, the author found the manuscript of Violi, and he has made use of it in the subsequent part of his work.
—*The Author to the Translator.*

mind. Such, however, was the candour and goodness of his nature, that that very confidence in himself increased his modesty and humility. In his prayers, and in the expression of his faith, his religious excitement was so great, that his companion, Father Sebastian, of Brescia, told every one that Savonarola, while praying, was frequently in a trance; that such was his fervour that after the celebration of the mass he was often forced to retire into a place where he might be alone; * and that sometimes the head of Savonarola appeared to him to be surrounded by light.

A second success attended him on another occasion. A chapter of the Dominicans was held at Reggio, in which theological discussions and questions of discipline were to take place. He attended this chapter, and there were present not only a considerable number of the clergy, but some laymen of great reputation in literature and science. Among the latter, he who attracted most attention was the celebrated Giovanni Pico, Prince of Mirandola.† He was then not more than twenty-three years of age, but was already celebrated throughout the world as a prodigy of intellect, going generally by the name of the Phoenix of Genius. From his earliest years his precocious genius and extraordinary memory were subjects of wonder. He made rapid advances in his studies, and was eager to visit all the universities of Italy and France to attend the lectures. Not contented with writing Greek and Latin more easily than his native tongue, he was the first in that age to devote his time to the study of the Oriental languages, and, indeed, of any other language of which he could find either a master or a grammar, and he

* Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

† Uncle of the Giov. Francesco Pico della Mirandola, who wrote the Life of Savonarola.

was said to be acquainted with two and twenty. But not only in languages but in science he aspired to universal knowledge, and expected to be able to master the *omne scibile* of his time. So great were the praises which he received on all hands, and so high an opinion had he formed of himself that, on going to Rome, he announced that he was ready to respond publicly to nine hundred propositions, which he pretended contained the whole science of his time; and he sent invitations, in his name, to the learned, promising to those who stood in need of such assistance, to defray the expenses of their journey. These propositions were, after all, very insignificant, and substantially contained nothing of any importance. Some of them, however, related to judicial astrology, and were at once all condemned by the Pope; the whole challenge fell to the ground. Pico, without delay, wrote an apology, and tendered his submission to the Roman court; yet his fame, instead of being diminished by that step, went on increasing. It is at any rate certain that, with the exception of Lorenzo de' Medici, no name was more generally known than that of Mirandola. Posterity has treated him somewhat hardly, for his name gradually sank into oblivion. It must, however, be confessed that his learning was not very profound, and that he was far inferior in erudition to Politian, and in philosophy to Ficino.* Of the two and twenty languages that he made a boast of knowing, so little was he in reality conversant with them that a Jew was able to sell him sixty separate manuscripts as having been written by command of Esdras, while the whole sixty formed together one work, the 'Cabbala;' of some others he only knew the alphabet. He wrote Italian without

* *Jo. Pici Opera*, Basil. vol. ii., in folio. His philosophy was no more than a feeble imitation of Ficino.

elegance, and his literary judgement was so little to be relied upon, that he was one of those who preferred the poetry of Lorenzo de' Medici to that of Petrarca and Dante.* He had, however, considerable merit in other things. Besides having been the first in that age who promoted the study of the Oriental languages, which before his time had attracted the attention of no one in Europe, he set the example of indefatigable industry, devoted wholly to the cultivation of literature; of a prince renouncing all the honours of his station to live on an equality with the learned. His facile genius, powerful memory, varied and animated conversation, noble and graceful manners, a handsome youthful figure, fair hair falling in profuse ringlets over his shoulders, all combined to awaken sympathy for him, and greatly contributed to spread his name. Such was the man who drew around him a circle of all the learned assembled in the capital of Reggio, and to whom the highest ecclesiastical authorities paid homage.†

Savonarola sat among the Friars, wholly absorbed in his own contemplations; with his hood drawn over his head, his face pale and haggard, his dark eye intensely vivid but immovable; his forehead furrowed with deep wrinkles; all testifying in his outward person a mind habitually absorbed in deep thought. If any one had that day compared him with Pico, the one so charming, graceful, sociable and gay, the other grave, solitary,

* Letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, Idibus Julii, 1484. There were several at that time who thought very little of the poetry of Dante.

† Many are the writers who have spoken of Pico della Mirandola, but a true judgement of his genius can only be formed by a perusal of the two great folio volumes of his works; which treat of subjects the most various, not unfrequently in a very superficial manner, but always with an ardent and sincere love of truth. Among the many who have passed judgement upon him, we would particularly notice a volume of miscellaneous essays, in which many exact and well selected particulars are narrated, respecting Politian, Pico, and many others, published by the Rev. W. Pair Greswell, Manchester, 1805.

and severe almost to harshness, would have pronounced them to be two characters so directly opposed to each other, that, under no circumstances, could they have a community of feeling. Yet, on that very day, they became friends, and continued so to the end of Savonarola's life. In Pico, neither fame, eulogies, nor his high opinion of himself, had been able to corrupt his heart. His disposition, very different from that of the learned of his day, was essentially good, and was ingenuously open to the holy inspirations of truth and goodness; and this proved quite sufficient to bind together in close and enduring friendship two men of natures so entirely different.

Savonarola entered warmly into the disputations carried on that day. So long as they were confined to dogmas he remained unmoved and silent; he took no part in a discussion in which there was only a trial of scholastic acumen; but when they came to a question of discipline, then he rose, and with a voice like that which had resounded at Brescia, he roused the assembly as with a clap of thunder, and held them motionless and astounded. While declaiming against the corruption of the clergy, the impetuosity of his harangue so carried him away, that he found it difficult to stop. But his speech left an impression on all, that it had proceeded from a man gifted with a superior mind.* Many expressed a desire to become acquainted with him, and several princes entered afterwards into correspondence with him on literary subjects; but he who, above all the rest, was carried away by his eloquence, was the young Pico, who from that day became his devoted admirer, one of his followers, and one of his most cordial friends. From that day Pico began praising him to the skies, and spreading his fame over all Italy; and, when he arrived in

* Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti.

Florence, he never rested until he had persuaded Lorenzo de' Medici to write to Savonarola to return to the Convent of St. Mark. Their friendship then became more and more intimate, Pico's admiration of him daily became greater, and there is little doubt that a premature death alone prevented him from assuming the habit and becoming a member of the convent.

Savonarola continued in Lombardy until January, 1470, when he went to preach in Genoa.* On the 25th of that month he was at Pavia, from whence he wrote a long letter to his mother, full of affection and devotion to her.† He asks her forgiveness for offering nothing more for his family except what his prayers may effect, his religious profession making it impossible for him to do more; but he tells her that with his whole heart he shares in all their joys and sorrows:—‘I have renounced the world,’ he says, ‘and have become a labourer in the vineyard of the Lord in many cities, not for the salvation of my own soul only, but for that of many others. If the Lord has entrusted the talent to me, I must do that which is pleasing to Him; and since He has selected me for the sacred duty, I must rest contented that I am fulfilling it far from my native country; for I am producing much more fruit than it would have been possible for me to do in Ferrara. There it would have come to pass with me as it did with Christ, when his fellow countrymen said, “Is not this man a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter?”‡ That has never been said to me out of my own country; the rather, when I am about to depart, men and women weep, and they highly prize my

* We must again say that the chronology of those travels of Savonarola has been entirely settled by the researches of Padre Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*.

† See Appendix C.

‡ ‘Is not this the carpenter?’ Mark vi. 3. ‘Is not this the carpenter’s son?’ Matthew xiii. 55.—TR.

words. I thought to have written only a few lines, but my love has carried my pen onward, and has made me lay open my whole heart to you in a way I never dreamt of. Know, then, that that heart is more than ever resolved to devote soul and body, and all the light of knowledge that God has given me, to his service, and for the salvation of everyone who is my neighbour; and since such a work cannot be carried on in my own country, I must do it elsewhere. Counsel all to lead a righteous life. I depart this day for Genoa.*

After having preached during Lent, 1490, in Genoa, Savonarola, on the urgent request of Lorenzo, was recalled by his superiors in the convent to Florence. Thus the bitter enemy of the Medici, the subverter of their power, received from that family this pressing invitation. Notwithstanding all his acuteness, Lorenzo did not foresee what serious calamities he was preparing for his house, nor the fire he was kindling in that convent which his grandfather had erected.†

* Padre Marchese, *Lettere inedite del Savonarola*, Lettera i, 'scritta in Pavia, in fretta, il dì de la conversione di San Paolo Apostolo, 1490.' We have only given the sense of the original, coming as near as was possible to the words he makes use of.

† That Savonarola came a second time to Florence, at the urgent request of Lorenzo, who had been induced by Pico to invite him, is a fact which is recorded in all the biographies, ancient and modern. M. Perrens¹ narrates it on the authority of a manuscript, which he himself confesses to be a bad paraphrase of Burlamacchi, a copy in which some facts are arbitrarily added. But everyone ought to follow an original work, rather than a bad copy; especially when it has been found to be contradicted by all the other biographies. Nor is there any weight in another reason adopted by M. Perrens, namely, that too long an interval had elapsed between Savonarola being at the capital of Reggio and his arrival in Florence, for that Lorenzo was accustomed to be promptly obeyed. Pico may not have gone soon to Florence, Lorenzo may not have assented readily to the request; and, in any case, a friar was not bound to receive orders directly from him. See Burlamacchi, p. 15; Barsanti, p. 20; Marchesé, p. 25, &c.

¹ *Jérôme Savonarole, sa Vie, ses Prédications, ses Écrits*. Paris, 1853, vol. ii.

Savonarola had not forgotten the icy indifference of the Florentines, and had no desire to expose himself to it a second time. He therefore resumed the instruction of the novices in the Convent of St. Mark, on which he bestowed the utmost care, and on which he rested his fondest hope. He inculcated his own sentiments and ideas, and meanwhile waited for better days. But his name had by this time become known, and the opinion of Pico had great weight in Florence; so that several of Savonarola's best friends besought him to satisfy the public curiosity, and allow a small number at least to be present at his lectures. He reluctantly gave his consent; and, in the cloister of St. Mark, near a damask rose tree, which the veneration of the friars has renewed from time to time to the present day, he began to expound the Book of Revelation to an audience restricted to a small number of indulgent hearers. But their number went on increasing from day to day, and he was constantly urged to address them from the pulpit. Unwilling to refuse such a request, he recommended his audience to pray to the Lord in his behalf and one Saturday he said to them, 'To morrow I shall speak in the church, and there will be a lecture and a sermon.' *

It was the first of August, of the year 1490; St. Mark's was thronged by people who wished to hear this new preacher, the same who had formerly delivered many discourses in Florence without exciting any observation; but since that time he had established a great name in other parts of Italy. He now mounted the pulpit, and he himself has left a written record of the

* As we have said above, the history of his preaching is given not only in his biographies, but may be gathered with more correctness from the *Compendio di Revelazione*, and from some of his sermons, which we shall have occasion to quote hereafter. Not a few particulars exist, also, in the printed edition of his Trial, and in that which we discovered, as well as in a letter of Benivieni, and in the works of Frà Benedetto.

terrific discourse he delivered on that day. He continued his exposition of the Revelation, and the walls of St. Mark for the first time echoed with the celebrated conclusions he drew from that sacred book. He thus succeeded, for a while, to rouse in the excited multitude the fervour of his own feelings, for his voice seemed to them to be superior to human. The success of that day was complete; it became the subject of conversation in all the societies of Florence; and the learned, for a moment, laid Plato aside to discuss the merits of the Christian preacher.

But he did not allow himself to be deluded by that momentary triumph: he well understood that the erudite would soon wage an obstinate war against him; and as they could not attack him in any other way, that they would denounce his small amount of learning. In order, therefore, to stifle such voices in their birth, he determined to publish several of his writings; so that while by anticipation he was answering the learned, he was at the same time affording instruction to the people. We shall now proceed to an examination of those publications, by which we shall exhibit a nearer view of the powers of his mind, which we have not, as yet, been able to allude to more than slightly; as all his sermons and his writings before this epoch in his life have been lost.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THEORETICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SAVONAROLA.

OF all the works of Savonarola, the philosophical writings which he composed for the instruction of the novices in the Convent of St. Mark have received the least attention. Almost all his biographers, without having read them, have been in the habit of representing them as feeble and servile imitations of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. Several circumstances have concurred to spread this opinion, which we consider to be entirely erroneous. In the first place, the limited extent of those works, and their not being held in much estimation even by Savonarola himself; and in the next place, from the heavy charges he used to make against philosophers and philosophy, representing such studies to be all vanity; it was not possible to believe that a man who had treated a science in so disparaging a manner could produce anything of value relating to it; and the assertion that those writings were made up, in great part, of translations and compendious views of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, became the generally received opinion.

Reasons such as these, however, were not sufficient to deter us from a careful examination of those writings; nor did they diminish our desire to determine for ourselves how far the generally adopted opinions were well-founded. We took into account how much the first lights of the modern philosophy had been involved in

darkness, and how difficult it had been for historians to trace them. We knew how much, at that time, men were in the habit of indiscriminately imitating Aristotle, or Plato, or some other ancient author, but that so soon as the new philosophy arose, it forced its way despite of Aristotelians, Platonists, and all other schools. Then imitators, translators, and commentators began gradually to be sensible of a new existence, and to enter upon a new path; but it is not easy to find among the first innovators any one who had discarded his former guide. To form a right opinion of a philosopher of the regenerated school, it was not enough to enquire whether he had or had not followed Aristotle, or how far he had imitated or copied him, but whether he had or had not recognised the authority of his own reason, of his self-consciousness, and whether a new spirit was alive within him? That was the question. Therefore, in examining the writings of Savonarola, we did not try to find out how many times he had given us a translation of Aristotle, had imitated Boethius, or copied St. Thomas: but we rather endeavoured to discover some page in which he had said—let us trust to our individual experience, to our own reason; let us listen to the voice of our own conscience, to that which proceeds from the conscience in mankind. Another consideration withheld us from adopting the opinion so universally pronounced by preceding biographers: we remembered the energy with which Savonarola, in the pulpit, had always contended against the antiquity which had invaded with its paganism the society of that time. Many a time he brought the charge of materialism against the Aristotelian philosophy which he found so blindly followed:—‘Has your Aristotle,’ he was constantly in the habit of saying, ‘succeeded in proving the immortality of the soul? If he shows uncertainty on that vital point, I cannot comprehend how you spend so much useless labour in the study of his

writings.' But we attached still greater weight to our observation, that in his theological writings he reasons with so much freedom and independence, with such subtlety of analysis, and skill in induction ; so that, to follow the common opinion, we should be obliged to say — Savonarola had two systems of philosophy directly opposed the one to the other ; in one he was the slave of Aristotle, and the follower of that scholastic, whom so many had already forsaken : and such was the philosophy he taught to the novices ; in the other he was free and independent, full of ardour and boldness ; a spirit which is to be found in an infinite number of his theological and ascetic writings, which he made manifest in the pulpit, and adhered to through his whole life. A desire to reconcile so contradictory a state of mind has induced us to examine his writings and philosophical principles with great diligence ; after which we found every apparent contradiction disappear.

At that time, two schools of philosophy were dominant in Italy, the Platonic and Aristotelian. The first took its rise in the Academy of Florence, and spread itself southward ; advancing farther and farther in its ideas, it ended, as we have seen, in the transcendental idealism of Giordano Bruno. The second began to flourish by the influence of Pomponaccio, and many more ; and was propagated in Northern Italy by being taught in the universities of Bologna, Pavia, Padua, and elsewhere : it urged the importance of experiment, gave a great impulse to natural science, and in Galileo Galilei attained its highest developement. Aristotle was thus the true founder of experimental philosophy, not less in modern than in ancient times, and if his fame was lessened in the opinion of many, it arose from not distinguishing the true Aristotle from that of the scholastics.

Out of those two schools a third arose at a later

period, which may be said to have been first established by Bernardino Telesio and Tommaso Campanella. Telesio had received his education at Padua, where he was trained in the study of experimental philosophy and the natural sciences. He was inclined to oppose the authority of Aristotle, and recommended experience; but he was, in fact, rather a follower of Parmenides, in accordance with whose ideas he wrote his work, *De Rerum Natura*: he returned to his native Cosenza, and there founded the celebrated Accademia Cosentina. In that academy Tommaso Campanella was educated, and afterwards became a Dominican monk. He was by nature an idealist, and thus was led to deviate from the opinions held by Telesio, and so he was more properly the originator of the third school above-mentioned. Campanella, on the one hand, approved of the doctrines of experience, and therefore assigned to sensation so great a part in the formation of our ideas, that he may almost be considered as a pure sensist; on the other hand, he contended for the existence of a *cognitio abditata*, an intuition of primary ideas, of which he affirmed that, without any aid from sensation, we have a certainty greater than any other; but he was never able to show how we came down from the intuitive first ideas to sensation, nor how from sensation we rose to the ideas. Hence his doctrine was fundamentally an imperfect eclecticism, in which experimental philosophy was associated with a kind of neo-platonic idealism, towards which the author had a natural inclination, mixed up with the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, but without the different elements ever being so blended as to attain systematic unity. Every now and then, however, one sees flashes of a marvellous genius, and, throughout, a lofty spirit of liberty and independence of thought. His doctrine was the product of a bold, powerful, and enterprising mind, which, although de-

fective in point of method and clearness, showed itself on many occasions to have both penetration and precision.*

Singularly enough, Savonarola was placed in almost the same conditions that, at a later period, produced the philosophy of Campanella. A Dominican monk like him, he had devoted much of his time to the study of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, whose doctrines entered into all his ideas; trained in his youth in experimental science and the Aristotelian philosophy; going afterwards to Florence, where he found himself in the centre of the neo-platonic philosophy, and in close intercourse with Ficino and the Academicians; and all this with a disposition that led him very near to mysticism. The mind of Savonarola himself had no small resemblance to that of Campanella. He had so enlarged and ardent a spirit that he would mentally embrace the universe; at one time he would display unlooked-for clearness and power, and at another give himself up to the formulæ of the scholastics. He was, however, superior to Campanella in this respect, that his whole heart and mind were guided by one moral principle, clear, precise, and powerful, the soul of all his thoughts, the light of his life, inseparable from his existence. The philosophies of these two Dominican friars have so

* Campanella, *Metaphysica*, Parisiis, 1638, is in the Magliabechian library, and the greater part of his works are in the Riccardian and Marucellian libraries. Baldachini of Naples, has written a careful biography of him. D'Ancona has published the political works (Turin, 1854), preceded by a biography, containing important particulars. He has, however, neglected to examine and publish the *Monarchia Messianica*, which we cannot approve of, because that supplies the completion of the author's entire political system. Having published the *Monarchia Spagnuola*, in which Italy is subjected to Spain, he ought to have published that work in which Spain is subjected to Rome, left, according to Campanella, mistress of the world. As to his philosophical system, we may refer to what is said of it by Mamiani in his *Rinnovamento*; what Spavanta says in his learned articles in the Piedmontese review, *Il Cimento*, and the minute examination of it by Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Hamburg, 1841-1852.

close a resemblance to one another, that it is surprising that we should have been the first to have observed it.*

Before proceeding to discuss the various philosophical writings of Savonarola in detail, we must remark, *in limine*, that it appears from old catalogues of his manuscripts that science had occupied much of his attention, and that he had left behind him several works which have been lost, among which was a compendium of all the works of Plato and Aristotle.† The minor works that have been printed are contained in a single volume in which there are four small tracts—*Compendio di Filosofia, di Morale, di Logica*, and one with the title *Divisione e Dignità di tutte le Scienze*. ‡

* Padre Marchese, in his *Storia di San Marco*, p. 164, is disposed to draw a parallel between the political ideas of Savonarola and those of Campanella, comparing the *Città del Sole* with the treatise on the *Reggimento di Firenze*. But the political ideas of the two friars were, as we shall see, very different; besides which, the *Città del Sole* is the Utopia of Campanella, and by no means the system that he would actually put in practice,—so that the comparison with the *Reggimento di Firenze* entirely fails. With regard to the philosophical works, Marchese afterwards says, p. 104,—‘We have in this compendium an epitome of all ‘the writings of the Stagyrte, however various.’ Meier, diligent as he was in examining the works of Savonarola, says no more than this:—‘Aristotle ‘naturally forms the ground-work, but, together with many references to ‘St. Thomas Aquinas, he shows a judgement and critical power of his own. ‘The style is generally easy, and an aim at clearness and precision is ‘unmistakeably apparent.’ (*Savonarola*, &c., erst. Kap. s. 25.) Poli, also, in his additions to Tenneman, remarks the order and clearness of Savonarola. Rudelbach is wholly occupied in trying to find Protestant ideas, and takes no notice of the philosophical writings. M. Perrens has the merit of having directed his attention to them; but he, according to his custom, translates fragments only, without attempting to pronounce any judgement upon them as a whole; he, however, expresses his opinion in the following terms:—‘Ces écrits sont, pour ainsi dire, des catéchismes sans prétention; l’auteur n’y met rien du sien.’—Vol. ii. p. 308.

† *Aristotelis pene Opera omnia et Platonis abbreviata*. We found this catalogue in a Latin biography of Savonarola in manuscript, that had been transferred to the Magliabechian library from the Convent of St. Mark, i. vii. 28. In that convent there is a manuscript containing many things relating to Savonarola, in which mention is made of different unpublished works, and of a large number of his autograph writings which have been lost.

‡ Venetiis, apud Juntas, 1542. Another edition was published at

His '*Philosophy*' begins by treating of entity, motion, prime moving power, heaven, the generation and decay of all things; and in this way he submits all nature to examination, beginning with inanimate objects, and ending with man. He describes the world as the Aristotelians then described it, namely, as a huge animal having three great souls, the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual. We shall not stop to follow the author minutely in this, for he only repeats the ideas of the school. But in his theory of our knowledge, we recognise his bold hand and his freedom of mind; and we shall therefore lay it more particularly before our readers;—'We must, in all cases, proceed from the known to the unknown; for by this way alone can we arrive at truth with any degree of facility.*' 'Sensations are nearest and most known to us; they become stored up in the memory, where the mind transforms individual sensations into one general rule, or experience; nor does it stop here, but, proceeding onward, arrives at universal truths by the union of many experiences.†' Therefore, true experience resolves itself into first principles—primary causations; it is speculative, free, and of the highest nature.‡

All our knowledge, therefore, is derived from sensa-

Wittenberg, in 1596. We know not what the oldest editions may have been. In the Magliabechian library there is a copy of the *Logica*, 'impressum Piscie, 1492, die xv. Augusti, ad laudem individue Trinitatis.' Audin quotes an edition of the 15th century of the work *De omnium Scientiarum Divisione, &c.*

* Lib. i. 17. 'In omni doctrina a notioribus nobis est incipiendum. Sic enim facilior est disciplina, quia faciliter magis nota ducunt in cognitionem earum quæ sunt nobis ignota, vel minus nota, quæ tamen sunt secundum naturam notiora.'

† 'Homo autem potest facere talem collationem: ratio enim hominis inferior, est collativa singularium individualium; unde ex multis memoriis unius rei colligit experimentum, *Ex multis autem experimentis fit universalis quedam acceptio de omnibus similibus.*' Lib. i. 28.

‡ Lib. i. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

tion,—‘thence, in philosophy, that part which treats of the sensitive substance must precede that which treats what is superior to senses.’* In another place he discourses, after this manner, on the process by which sensation is transformed into an idea. ‘Sensations unite before our fancy in the form of images; and then the intellect becomes master of them, and by its own special virtue transforms them into intellectual acts.’† From sensation, therefore, without any process of ratiocination, *without any doctrinal authority*, we obtain our knowledge. But the intellect itself could not transform sensations into ideas *without pre-existing intellectual knowledge*; deprived of which it would amount to no more than a *power* incapable of arriving at an *act of knowledge*, incapable of comprehending even the meaning of words. *Every doctrine consequently must be founded on the pre-existent knowledges acquired by the senses, and in a pre-existent knowledge of first principles.* These we know independently of any demonstration, because true and self-evident. ‡ They, in fact, seem remote from us, and most

* ‘Illa pars hujus scientiæ quæ est de substantia sensibili, prior est ea quæ est de insensibili (here called superior to senses) ordine doctrinæ.’ Lib. i. 28.

† ‘Intellectus agens est virtus animæ. In anima est virtus quædam, per quam anima se ipsam possit reducere in actum intelligendi: hoc autem fit per hoc, quod sensibilia fiunt acta intelligibilia; quod nullo modo fit nisi a conditionibus individuantes abstrahuntur et fiunt universalis; conditiones autem individuantes per phantasmata intellectui afferuntur, seu appropinquantur, et per virtutem intellectus agentis similitudo universalis resultat intellectu possibili.’ — *Logica*, lib. xiv. 7.

‡ ‘Omnis doctrina et omnis disciplina intellectiva fit ex præexistenti cognitione. Primum quidem, omnis cognitio intellectiva fit præexistenti cognitione sensus. Per sensum enim acquirimus cognitionem in intellectu. Quædam igitur intellectus, *absque discursu et absque doctore, mediantibus sensibus cognoscit*; sed doctrinam et disciplinam acquirens, vel per se ipsum vel per alterum habere non potest sine *præexistenti cognitione intellectiva*. Si enim omnino nihil cognosceret, esset in pura potentia ad cognitionem, et ideo se ipsum non posset in actum cognitionis reducere, nec per alterum reduci posset.’ — *Logica*, lib. viii. 5.

difficult to comprehend, but they are substantially truth and evidence in themselves. They are not only true in themselves, but also, inasmuch as they form and are the truth of those other principles of experience which come nearer and more easily to us. And, in truth, the things most evident of themselves are those which partake more of the *actum essendi*: as God himself, the first intelligences and the original principles. Our intellect proceeds from power to the act of knowledge: in the power it sees with evidence, and almost by intuition, those first principles that are most clear and come nearest to our mind; but when it comes to an act of knowledge, that is, when we are forced to rise from particulars, then we find them remote and most difficult.* The difficulty, then, is not in knowing the ideas pre-existing in the intellect, but in establishing a relation between the first sensations and the first ideas; in filling up the vast void between them, that is to say, in the very foundation of the science itself.

In this way Savonarola, with great acumen, laid down the fundamental problem in philosophy; but further he did not go; nor did he try to overcome the difficulty he

* Comp. *Phil.* lib. i. 13. 'Cognitio veritatis partim facilis, partim difficilis. Facilis quidem est, quia nullus ita expers veritatis quin aliquid cognoscat; et licet unus solus parum apponat ad veritatem, tamen facile est ut multi faciant magnam veritatis aggregationem, et maxime quia nullus est qui erret circa prima principia, juxta proverbium: in foribus quis aberret? Difficilis autem est, quia *difficilis est composita resolvendo usque ad ultimas causas, et componentia usque ad composita perfectam reducere.*' Lib. i, 13. See also lib. i, 17, 18; lib. ii. 4; *Logica*, lib. viii. 6, 7, 8.

From the portions we have quoted, the reader will easily see that the language, the form, and many of the ideas, are entirely Aristotelian; and how, notwithstanding, the doctrine, as a whole, is new and original. It is necessary also to reflect that Savonarola was obliged to adopt this course in his lectures to the novices, for in the cloisters of that day, and for many ages afterwards, no other philosophy than the scholastic was taught. Now a days all other studies have become neglected, nothing but theology being attended to, and that, as every one knows, is still clothed in the scholastic dress.

so clearly saw before him. He, on many occasions, repeats that induction is the most efficacious method of advancing from the known to the unknown, but he contents himself too much with this vague generality, and there constantly remains the same void in his system as, at a later period, was found in that of Campanella. Further than this, we frequently remark in our author certain series of ideas which by no means agree: the doctrines of Plato and Aristotle are often mixed up with the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, without at all harmonising. This mistake may be the more readily excused in Savonarola, inasmuch as he did not make philosophy his sole object of attention, and in these very brief tracts, drawn up for the use of the novices only, it was impossible for him to encounter, far less to solve, the most difficult problem in the science.

So far as regards this first part of his philosophical writings, that is, of philosophy properly so called, we have nothing more to remark; because the author servilely follows Aristotle, and in the remaining portion of the work often translates him. We shall pass on, then, to where he discourses on *Moral Philosophy*. In this second tract he again follows St. Thomas, leaning however a little more to non-platonic ideas, and here we plainly perceive the influence of the Academy and of Ficino. ‘Beatitude,’ he says, ‘is the ultimate end of man, and that does not consist in the contemplation of speculative science, as our natural philosophers would have us believe, but solely in the contemplation of God. In this life we can only have a remote image, an uncertain shadow of that beatitude; in that alone which is to come shall we enjoy its fulness and reality. Although it is not possible to be attained by human means only, man ought to strive towards it by a *motus ad beatitudinem*, which would infuse into him the disposition to arrive at

it. God alone is in Himself blessed; man has need of many efforts, *motibus multis*, which are no other than good works, which we call also merits, *because happiness is the reward of virtuous actions.** And here it is well to remark, that both in his philosophy and his theology, Savonarola always insists strongly on the efficacy and necessity of good works, and consequently on human free will. ‘That,’ he says, ‘which distinguishes man from the lower animals is his free will, which is not a quality nor a habit, but is the essence itself of the will, *est ipsa hominis voluntas.*’† He then attacks astrologers, who make it subject to the stars. Our will cannot be moved to evil by any external force, be it the stars, be it our passions, be it God himself. The Creator upholds and does not destroy: the creature and all things move according to laws implanted in their nature. Our will is by its very nature essentially free; it is the personification of liberty. God alone, therefore, can ‘move it freely, unless it be His will to destroy it.’ Many sound and acute remarks are contained in this tract; but we meet with such more abundantly in some of his other works; so that we shall, for the present, pass them by. We would, however, call attention to some of his ideas on *veracity*; because they will serve to refute the opinion of those who would have us believe that Savonarola assumed a character which he knew did not belong to him, and that he pretended to be a prophet in order to lead the people more easily. Such an opinion we believe to be contradicted by facts, and by Savonarola’s own words, an example of which we will now give:—‘By veracity we understand ‘a certain habit by which a man, both in his actions and ‘in his words, shows himself to be that which he really ‘is, neither more nor less. This, although not a legal,

* *Comp. Phil. Mor.*, lib. i. 25.† *Ibid.* lib. i. 2.

‘ is a moral duty, for it is a debt which every man, in honesty, owes to his neighbour, and the manifestation of truth is an essential part of justice.’* We shall not stop to notice what he says of *politics* and *economics*, which, according to scholastic doctrines, constitute a part of morals, because we shall have occasion to go into the subject at some length when we come to speak of the political ideas of the author. Neither shall we touch upon his *Logica*, for it is nothing more than an epitome of the dialectics of the scholastics; and the few ideas of any importance in that treatise we have already alluded to.

It now remains for us to advert to the tract on the *Division of all Sciences*, written by Savonarola in answer to the charges made against him of undervaluing poetry, and of not attaching any importance to philosophy. In his defence, he draws out a general table of all the sciences, showing the proper position which each ought to occupy; determining that according to their respective dignity. The table he presents is clear, precise, and happily conceived, but fundamentally, it is the same division as that adopted by the scholastics. He makes two grand divisions of philosophy, into the rational and the positive: the first serving as a guide to reason, and constituting logic: the second treating of real existences, and subdividing it into practical and speculative. The practical he again subdivides into mechanical and moral, according as it treats of mechanical professions or the moral actions of man; and the moral is considered under the head of ethics, economics, and politics. In speculative philosophy he embraces three sciences, physical, mathematical, and metaphysical, according as it treats of that which is insepa-

* *Comp. Phil. Mor.*, lib. iii. 23.

nable from matter, of that which can be separated from matter by a process of abstraction only, or of that which is absolutely immaterial. He instals metaphysics as the queen of all the sciences, absorbed in the contemplation of the highest truths, and more than all the rest ennobling and elevating man.* This, however, Savonarola adds, is speaking according to purely human views; for in the light of Christianity theology is the true and only science. All other sciences consider individual things under individual aspects, theology alone considers all under one single and universal aspect; it is the chief science, tracing every thing to the First Cause: and for this the light of nature is not sufficient; there must be a light from above. Hence it is easy to perceive how all other sciences must give place to and be eclipsed by this supreme science. This consideration at a later period led Savonarola to speak with so much disparage-

* Although the division of the sciences made by Campanella has been by some so highly praised, it is almost identical with that of Savonarola, and both fundamentally differ in no respect from the scholastic. It is doubtless true that we sometimes find ideas in Campanella that would lead us to suppose that he had formed his divisions upon much higher principles, but the ideas are only hinted at, and even not unfrequently contradicted. The following table exhibits Savonarola's divisions, and points out wherein that of Campanella differs. We will only add, that they are in perfect accordance with all his views of the importance and nature of theology.

UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHY.

REAL.		RATIONAL.			
PRACTICAL		SPECULATIVE.			
MECHANICAL	MORAL	NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.	MATHEMATICAL	METAPHYSICAL.	LOGIC
	<i>Ethics, Economics, Politics.</i>	Campanella: <i>De sensu rerum, De rerum natura.</i>	Campanella <i>Astrologicorum.</i>		Campanella divides Logic into — <i>Dialettica, Grammatica, Rhetorica, Poetica, &c.</i>
	Of these three, Campanella makes one only in three parts.				

ment of philosophy, poetry, and every kind of profane study.

We have limited ourselves to the principal divisions only, and have abstained from referring to poetry (which, in conformity with the scholastics, Savonarola makes a part of logic) because we shall hereafter have occasion to consider his views respecting it at some length. We shall for the present do no more than quote what he says of those who, on every occasion, but especially as relates to poetry, servilely followed what they find in ancient writers. ‘Some are so bigoted, and have so entirely submitted their understandings to the fetters of the ancients, that they not only do not dare to say anything in opposition to them, but even will say nothing that has not been already said by them. What reasoning is this? What additional weight does such a method of argument supply? The ancients did not reason thus; why then should we? If the ancients failed to perform a praiseworthy action, why should we also fail?’* This was his uniform language. In that age, when no book was written except to praise some ancient author to the skies, Savonarola was the only one to raise his voice against them. But he did even more than this, for laying the ancients entirely aside, he adopted his own reason as his guide, and advanced forward without any other support. Nor do we find this only in his philosophical writings; but, as we have already remarked, we find numerous proofs of it in his sermons and theological works. Take, for instance, his ‘Triumph of the Cross,’ his greatest work; that in which he expounds the whole Christian doctrine by natural reason. In the preface we find the following passage:—‘As

* *De Divisione*, &c. lib. iv. It is singular that we find almost the same words in Campanella. See his *Poetica*, and his treatise *De Libris Propriis*.

‘it is our purpose to discuss the subject of this book solely by the light of reason, we shall not pay regard to any authority, but will proceed as if there had not existed in the whole world any man, however wise on whom to rest our belief, taking natural reason as our sole guide.’ * Again : ‘To comprehend things that are visible, it is not necessary to seek the acquaintance of things invisible, for all our knowledge of the extrinsic attributes of corporeal objects is derived from the senses; but our intellect by its subtlety penetrates the substance of natural things, by the consideration of which we finally arrive at a knowledge of things invisible.’ † It must not be supposed that these are detached thoughts, met with in the course of the work, for they belong to the very beginning of it, and are put forth to announce the design and the plan upon which it is to be executed. Every chapter begins with a kind of protest against the supposition that he has learned anything from mortal man, repeating that there is no necessity to accept any other authority than our own experience, our individual reason, and thus he advances to his end, proceeding from the known, to the unknown.

If we remember that Savonarola lived in the latter part of the fifteenth century, when Marsilio Ficino was looked upon as the greatest philosopher in Europe, we must allow that he was the first to shake off the yoke of the authority of the ancients in philosophy.‡ The praises we bestow upon him are sincere and founded upon an accurate and impartial examination of his writings. His biographer Pacifico Burlamacchi, who knew him personally, thus speaks of him : — ‘From his earliest infancy he did not form his opinion of authors

* Proemio al *Trionfo della Croce*!

† Cap. i.

‡ We may also cite Lorenzo Valla, a man of the boldest genius; he was the first to declare war on Aristotle; he did so, however, more as a grammarian than a philosopher.

from their high reputation, nor did he follow opinions merely because they were in fashion, *but kept his eye steadily directed upon truth and reason.** These few and simple words give us a more faithful portrait of the man than is to be found in any of his subsequent biographers; and we ourselves, after much consideration of Savonarola's works, entirely concur in the judgement pronounced by the old chronicler.

We feel ourselves, however, bound to say, that we by no means intend to hold up the name of Savonarola so high in the history of philosophy as to give him greater scientific importance than that to which he is fairly entitled. He very often talked slightly of that science, was perpetually throwing blame upon it, sometimes even treating it with contempt; he seemed ever wishful to conceal the small treatises he had himself written; the consequence of which was, that they were soon forgotten. No mention is made of them in any history of philosophy, they are not quoted by any later philosopher, and Campanella himself, who, as we have

* Burlamacchi, p. 5; Pici, *Vita*, p. 8: 'Mirus erat veritatis amator, eo usque proventus, eius gratia, ut in his quos coleret doctoribus, si quid non placeret, ingenue fateretur.' Fra Benedetto and all those who knew Savonarola personally, make the same observations. See the *Vulnera Diligentis*, &c. All the learned in the latter part of the fifteenth century held the philosophical doctrines of Savonarola in the highest estimation. Ficino (in a letter to Giovanni Cavalcanti, dated Dec. 12, 1494, and Politian in a letter to Jacopo Antiquario, June 1492), speak of him as a man of *doctrina insignis*, Pietro Crinito in his work *De Honesta Disciplina*, lib. i. cap. 3, says of him:—*Qui ætate nostra in omni prope philosophia maxime præstat*. To conclude, we will quote the opinion of a man universally known. Francesco Guicciardini was one of Savonarola's ardent admirers, as may be seen in his *History of Florence*, that has just seen the light.¹ He had studied his works diligently, and he speaks of them with the highest admiration. He goes on to say, that in philosophy he was the most powerful man in Italy, and that he reasoned on it in so masterly a manner, that it seemed as if he had *himself created it*.

¹ Opere inedite di Francesco Guicciardini, illustrate da Giuseppe Canestrini Firenze, Barbera, 3 vols. More are expected.—Tr.

seen, might be held to be one of his followers, probably had not the most distant notion of their existence. But if these reasons may diminish the importance of the writings, they in no degree detract from the estimate to be formed of the mind of their author. We, however, considered it of the highest importance to become acquainted with the intellectual power of a man who played so conspicuous a part in the affairs of his time; a time that was preparing everywhere for Europe a new advance in civilisation, and for a revival of human reason. Whatever may have been the mission of Savonarola, whatever may have been the frame of his mind, and the ends he had in view, it became an indispensable duty in us, to endeavour to form a just estimate of the speculative nature of his mind, and to decide, whether or not he is to be ranked among the *New Men*. This, however, appears to us certain, that if Savonarola be not placed at the head of that revival of which he had a sort of prophetic vision, if he be not considered as the precursor of all those who, at a later period, took part in it, and to none of whom he can be held to yield the palm in the highest heroic virtue, and the most lofty aspirations, nor to have been less open to strange errors, it will not be possible to comprehend this man, upon whom so much has been written, although no one has succeeded to give that just estimate of his true character which we trust will be found in the present work.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EARLY RELIGIOUS WORKS OF SAVONAROLA, AND HIS
INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE.

IN duly considering the great movement in civilisation which took place in the sixteenth century, we shall find that the root of all the doctrines, of all the disputes, and of all the religious wars of that time, was a universal desire for a nearer approach unto God, and that that desire animated the learned, created a new enthusiasm, and gave strength to the martyrs. What, in fact, was all philosophy, all modern science, but an endeavour to bring the creature near to the Creator; although the effort was too often carried so far as to confound one with the other? What did the new religious doctrines promise, except to bring the faithful into direct relation with the Almighty,* although they afterwards went so far as to destroy all human free will. Whoever gravely reflects upon the subject, will come to the conclusion that to this one principle, to this spirit of love alone, are we indebted for the revival of civilisation, and the redemption of the human race from the abyss of sin into which it had fallen.

Already, near the close of the fifteenth century, it

* It was with this promise that the Reformation first saved a large portion of the human race from scepticism and materialism; these first led Catholicism to declare war against it; and afterwards, in the struggle, to recover its strength, and in part renew its youth. This is the settled opinion of the most orthodox writers.

was evident that new zeal had penetrated men's minds; that they had begun to have a new hope in the strength of ideas and of principles. The Alexandrian philosophy was then the soul and life of this movement; because it promised a vision of God, and in that it placed the sum of human felicity. This idea made its way, and quickly penetrated the hearts of men, and that at a time when materialism seemed destined to rule for ever. But while this sentiment first displayed itself in the world in the form of a theory derived from books, it had already shown itself to have existed in Savonarola from his birth; it pervaded his whole life, and may rather be said to have been his life itself. His sole aspiration was toward God; he had no other hope nor desire than to sacrifice all worldly objects for that aspiration. In judging of the greater part of his religious writings, it is necessary that we keep this constantly in view; which very often cannot be considered in any other light than as the manifestation of the religious sentiment, of that which may be termed his *santo furore*.

The works he published about the year 1492 consisted of four treatises, *On Humility*, *On Prayer*, *On the Love of Christ* and *On a Widow's Life*; written partly in a spirit of asceticism, partly in a simply religious and moral spirit. We shall endeavour to explain these ideas to our readers as faithfully as we can, so that they may best prove by what means he began to acquire his ascendancy over the minds of the people.

In the first of the above treatises he thus begins: *
'Humility and Charity are two virtues which are of the

* *Trattato dell' Umiltà*. In Firenze, per Antonio Miscomini, a dì ultimo di Giugno, 1492, 14 leaves. Other editions are, Firenze, 1495; Venezia, 1538, 1547. Audin quotes four more in the fifteenth century, without dates. In the notices we give of these treatises, we shall endeavour to give them, as is our custom, as nearly as possible in the words of the author.

first importance in the structure of the spiritual edifice; because Humility is the very foundation of the whole fabric; and Charity is its perfection and consummation. He that is faithful must therefore humble himself before God; must confess that he is of himself incapable of righteous actions, and that without the help of the Lord all his deeds are sinful. Nor is it enough that his intellect be convinced; it must become a deeply rooted sentiment in his soul. The will of man is free, and he must strive, with all his might, to banish pride, to be ever ready to receive grace; and all his outward actions must not only be useful, but be necessary to those ends. Let him, therefore, humble himself to those that are above him, to his equals, and even to those below him. But even while he has brought himself into this state, if he should imagine that he has performed a meritorious action, his outward humility will take away that which ought to be inwardly felt, and will have lost all its value. Let him hold himself, therefore, ever steadfast in the belief of his own unworthiness.'

In the treatise on Prayer* he says:— 'Prayer is one of the most efficacious means of keeping the sentiment of humility alive in a man. Let it, therefore, be long, fervent, and daily, ever bearing in mind that it must be accompanied by humility and charity, without which it is of no effect. If there be fervour, then, there is true prayer, and when man performs works of charity, then he may be said to pray.'

The same ideas are much better developed in another treatise, *Della orazione mentale*† 'He who prays to God ought to address Him as if He were present, for He

* *Trattato o vero sermone della Orazione*. Firenze, per Antonio Miscomini, 20 ottobre, 1492; 14 leaves. Other editions, Firenze, 1495; Venezia, 1538; four in the fifteenth century without dates.

† Firenze, 1492, 1495. Venezia, 1538, 1547; two other editions in the fifteenth century, without dates.

is everywhere, in every place, in every man, and especially in the soul of the just. Seek him not, therefore, on the earth, or in heaven or elsewhere: seek for him in your own heart; do as did the prophet, who says: "I shall hear that which the Lord shall say unto me." In prayer a man may be attending to the words, and this is a thing wholly of a material nature; he may be attending to the sense of the words, and this is rather study than prayer; and, lastly, his whole thoughts may be directed to God, and this alone is true prayer. It is unnecessary to be considering either sentences or words; the mind must be elevated above self, and must be wholly absorbed in the thoughts of God. Arrived at this state, the true believer forgets the world and its wants; he has attained almost a foreshadow of celestial happiness. To this state of elevation the ignorant may arrive as easily as the learned; it even frequently happens, that he who repeats a psalm without understanding its words, utters a much more holy prayer than the learned man who can explain its meaning. Words, in fact, are not indispensable to an act of prayer; when a man is truly wrapt in the spirit, an uttered prayer becomes rather an impediment, and ought to succumb to that which is wholly mental. Thus it will be seen how great a mistake those commit who prescribe a determinate number of prayers. God does not delight in a multitude of words, but in the fervour of the spirit.' He then goes on to say:—"Those will be opposed to us who are wholly occupied in standing up for the ceremonies and external worship of the Church. To such we shall reply as our Saviour did to the Woman of Samaria—"Woman, "believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in "this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true wor- "shippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." St. John's Gospel, iv. 21, 23. By this we learn that our

Lord inculcates inward worship, without ceremonial observances, and such was the custom in the primitive church, when it was not thought necessary to call in the aid of organs and of hymns, in order to elevate the mind to God. It was when fervour was relaxed that they begun to administer ceremonies, as medicines to men's minds: but we are now brought to the state of a sick man who has so lost all his natural powers, that medicine produces no effect upon him. All fervour, all inward worship, have disappeared, ceremonies increase more and more, and produce no effect. We are come, therefore, to declare to the world, that external must give way to internal, worship; that ceremonies are only the means whereby the spirit may be roused."

But the treatise 'On the Love of Jesus Christ,'* of which seven editions were published within a very short time, expresses still more clearly that mystical enthusiasm of Savonarola to which we have already referred. 'The love of Jesus Christ is to be seen in that degree of warm affection for Him which leads the faithful to wish that his soul may become almost a part of that of Christ, and that the living principle in the Lord may be reproduced in himself, not in the way of an external image, but as an inward and divine inspiration. He wished that the doctrine of Christ should be a living principle in him, that he might suffer martyrdom for his sake, and mystically be affixed to the same cross with him. This love is omnipotent, and cannot be realised without the operation of grace, because it makes man rise above his own nature, uniting the finite creature with the infinite Creator. Man, in fact, rises continually from humanity to something divine, when

* Firenze, by Antonio Miscomini, May 17, 1492; 28 leaves. A second edition came out in June of the same year, and five more without dates. Those editions of the works of Savonarola are very handsome, and some are illustrated with engravings by the first artists of the day.

he is animated by this love: which is the sweetest of all affections, penetrates the soul, acquires a mastery over the body, and causes the faithful to walk on earth, rapt as it were, in the spirit.'

We have here given almost the very words of Savonarola, because this conception of love, which recurs continually in his works, and is a fundamental point in his doctrine, has not hitherto been sufficiently noticed. It is no doubt true, that in his definition of it he is not very precise, for he sometimes says that this love is the same as grace, and sometimes he tells us that it is no other than charity. 'When grace is implanted in a man, it forthwith generates charity, and without grace true charity cannot exist in him; there is, however, an intermediate state, in which the believer, feeling the proximity and almost the breath of Deity, experiences a supreme felicity, and almost celestial excitement.' This inward state of the soul which receives grace and has charity for its offspring, is precisely that which Savonarola understands by *Love of Jesus Christ*. And the importance in his doctrine of that conception consists altogether in its expressing an entirely subjective state of the soul. A Christian cannot acquire charity without grace, which is a gratuitous gift of God, to attain which our own will can be of little service; but love being, on the contrary, an individual's disposition, man may very easily raise himself to it: grace thus becomes implanted in us almost naturally, and charity of necessity flows from our heart. Thus love has the superhuman power of reuniting the finite creature with the infinite Creator, and, to a certain extent, explains the mystery of human liberty and divine omnipotence.

This work concludes with some *Laudi e Contemplazioni infiammative* (exciting hymns of praise and contemplations), in which Savonarola gives vent to all kinds of exclamations upon the mercy and goodness of the

Lord, and to his ardent desire that his soul may become as one with him, to be raised up upon the same cross, fixed to it by the same nails, and wear the same crown of thorns. If we read all this in the sceptical spirit of our day, we shall look undoubtedly upon it as extravagant; but if, on the other hand, we consider it to have been written for the people, that Savonarola spoke from the dictation of a soul overwhelmed by the feeling of entire prostration before God, that they are the words of a man to whom this holy delirium gave a consolation of which we can form no conception, we shall then only be in a position to form a just estimate of their value. And we shall the more consider them to have a value, by remembering that Savonarola succeeded in infusing the same enthusiasm into the minds of the whole people, and that he was the first to see and to feel that this new love, this new delirium, having once taken possession of the multitude, would regenerate and impart fresh youth to the whole world.

In the treatise on 'A Widow's Life,'* published as far back as 1491, he gave, on the other hand, some sound practical moral precepts for the observance of widows. This short treatise shows how erroneous is the opinion of those who represent Savonarola as an enemy to matrimony, and would almost attribute to him the wish to reduce Florence to the state of a convent; he having, on the contrary, inculcated in this theme a doctrine full of good sense. 'Widows' he says, 'are, like children, under the special protection of the Lord. The true life for them to lead is to give up all worldly thoughts and devote themselves to the service of God; to become "like the turtle-dove, which is a chaste creature; " and thus, when it has lost its companion no longer

* *Libro della vita viduale*. Firenze, per ser Francesco Bonaccorsi, 1491; 30 leaves. Audin cites three other editions; two without dates: one by Lorenzo Morgianni, 1496; 26th November.

“ takes up with another, but spends the rest of its life in “ solitude and lamentation.” Nevertheless, if on account of the education of children, or through poverty, or inability to resist the incitements of the flesh, the widow desires to marry again, let her do so by all means: this would be far better than to be surrounded by admirers, and so expose herself to the risk of calumnies, and to a thousand dangers. Let the widow who is not inclined to maintain a strict decorum, or has any difficulty in observing the reserve becoming her position, rather return to the dignified life of a married woman. But let those who feel that they possess strength and temper of mind equal to what their state demands, become a model to other women. A widow ought to dress in sober attire, to live retired, to avoid the society of men, to be a personification of gravity, and ever to maintain such severity of demeanour that no one may dare to utter a word or show by a smile the least want of respect. By such a life she will be a continual lesson to other women, and will render it unnecessary for a widow to use words of counsel by which to acquire influence over others; she should avoid laying down precepts, unless upon some occasion when they are absolutely required; and in doing so let it be only to her children or grandchildren. It is unbecoming a widow to be prying into the lives and failings of other persons; it is unbecoming for her to be, or even appear to be, vain, nor ought she, for the sake of others, to forget what is due to herself.’

Aided by these works, Savonarola attained his object, and rose daily in the estimation of the learned and in the affections of the people. Although in philosophy he held firmly by the doctrine of reason, and although in his religious writings he gave way to the spontaneous sentiments of his mind, he did not the less feel convinced that these were not of themselves sufficient in an age accustomed to rest on authority alone. True it is

that very frequently he was so overpowered and carried away by his thoughts as to rest contented to affirm them as undeniable truths, and that in his state of religious exaltation he believed himself to be in so direct a relation to the Deity, that he required no other confirmation of his visions of futurity.* But when his object was to convince others, to silence the pride and importunity of the learned, and to persuade the people that extraordinary events were at hand, the authority of a book was, in that age, indispensable. And what other authority would Savonarola acknowledge than the Holy Scriptures? Who would dare to resist the words of the Lord? The Bible, besides, had been his faithful companion from his youth upwards, his comfort in sorrow, the instructor of his spirit. There was not a verse that he did not know by heart; not a page upon which he had not commented, from which he had not borrowed some idea in his sermons.† By his studies and meditations it had ceased to be to him a book; it had become a living and speaking world, a world without limits, in

* At the beginning of his copy of the Bible in the Magliabechian library (for which see the note at the end of this chapter), among other autograph notes this occurs: '*Conamur ita Scripturas exponere, ut ab infidelibus non irideamur*;' which amounts to this: 'My visions come directly from God; and therefore they would require no other confirmation, were it not that men, in the present day, are so given to unbelief.' It must be borne in mind, that those notes on the margins of his bibles were written entirely for his private use.

† He is said to have learned the Bible by heart. But it was that book read by an imagination which opened out the biblical language with a boldness and luxuriance, certainly as yet untried, and perhaps hardly surpassed in later days: every image, every allegory, every parable, every figure, has not one, but a thousand meanings. Meanings each of the same authority with its plainest and most literal significance,—meanings heaped one upon another with prodigal profusion; and that not in wanton ingenuity, but with a vehemence and fervour which enforce the belief that the preacher had the fullest confidence in every one of his wildest interpretations. There is still enough of the peripatetic philosophy of his master, S. Thomas Aquinas, to show that it is not for want, but from disdain, of erudition, that he rests his teaching on the word of God, and on that alone.—*Quarterly Review*, vol. xcix., p. 3; ascribed to Dean Milman.—TR.

which he found the revelations of the past and of the future. He scarcely opened the sacred pages without being exalted by the thought that he was reading the revealed word of God ; he found in them, as it were, the microcosm of the whole universe, the allegory of the history of the human race. In this study he found nutriment to his mind, and was thus induced to fill the margins of the sacred volume with interminable notes, in which he recorded the various inspirations of the moment, the manifold interpretations of each passage.*

It is only by examining his sermons that we obtain an idea of the different purposes to which Savonarola was able to apply the Bible. We may give a general idea of this by arranging them under certain heads ; thus, besides that of the literal interpretation, he divided almost every passage in the Bible under four other heads, namely *spiritual, moral, allegorical, anagogical*. The better to explain our meaning, let us take, for example, the first verse in Genesis : ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’ The spiritual sense refers to the spirit, hence heaven and earth signifies soul and body ; the moral sense refers in its turn to morals, hence heaven and earth meant reason and instinct ; the allegorical sense had a double meaning, it refers to the history of the Hebrew Church or the Christian Church : in the first sense, heaven and earth represented Adam and Eve ; the sun and the earth signified the High Priest and the king of the Hebrew people ; in the second, they, in their turn, signified the elected people and the people of the Gentiles, the Pope and the Emperor. The anagogical sense refers to the Church triumphant,

* ‘Dictis quæ aperta credimus, cum interjecta aliqua obscuriora invenimus, quæri quibusdam stimulis pungimur ut ad aliqua altiora intelligendum vigilemus ; et tunc obscurius perlata sentiamus ea etiam quæ ‘aperta’ putavimus’—*Autograph note in the same Bible.*

and hence heaven, earth, sun, moon and stars signified the angels, men, Jesus Christ, the Virgin, the saints, and so forth.*

In this way Savonarola found in the Bible a confirmation of all the thoughts, all the inspirations, all the prophecies that arose in his mind. There was nothing great or small, public or private, sacred or profane, for which he did not find a passage bearing upon it in the Bible. He however recommended the exercise of great caution in this study. 'It is necessary,' he said, 'to be prepared with a knowledge of the language and the history; that the reading should be uninterrupted, so as to produce an intimate familiarity;'[†] it is necessary to be on one's guard not to run counter to reason, nor contrary to the opinions held by the Church and the learned,[‡] and not to render the Scriptures subservient

* See the note at the end of this chapter.

[†] 'Ad charitatem, familiaritatemque Christi non pervenerit quisquis Sacrae Scripturae deliciis abundare non contendit.

'Sic, si familiaritate alicui homini ignoto conjungamur, usu colloquii eius etiam cogitationes indagamus, dum alia ex aliis colligimus; ex quibus cognoscimus aliud esse quod voces intimant et aliud quod sonant: ita summe augendum cum accedimus in Scripturis et in eis assuescimus; nam nobis locutiones earum innotescunt...

'Intelligentia dictorum ex causis est assumenda dicendi, quia non sermoni res, sed rei est sermo subjectus.' *Vide Hilarium*. 'Optimus lector dictorum intelligentiam expectet ex dictis, potius quam imponat, et retulerit magis quam attulerit, ne cogat id videri dictis contineri quod ante lectionem præsumpserit intelligendum. Cum ergo de rebus dictis sermo est, concedamus Deo sui cognitionem, dictisque eius pia veneratione famulemur.' *Ibidem*. These notes are sometimes very beautiful, and not unfrequently confirm what we have said of the independence of Savonarola's genius. From them several unpublished tracts may be obtained, such as full expositions of many psalms (e.g. the 94th, in the Magl. Bible), and of many parts of the Apocalypse, &c., which, together, would form a small volume of the author's minor works

[‡] 'In exponendis Scripturis, semper grammaticum utamur sensum, videlicet literalem primo; et ubi sunt plures sensus eum maxime sequimur quem plures graviioresque sequuntur, *præsertim cum sequitur eum Ecclesia Romana*: non spernentes tamen expositiones contrarias aliorum Sanctorum.

'Circa ea quæ ad fidem pertinent, quædam sunt de substantia, ut articuli; et circa hæc non licet contrarium opinari: et quædam non sunt

to our own personal ends, for we should then substitute our own intellect for the word of God.* But who is able to guide the faithful amid this sea of dangers, in this labyrinth so inextricable by human reason? The grace of God will guide us. Let the faithful, then, prepare to read the Bible with perfect purity of heart, accompanied by a long continued exercise of charity, and by elevating his thoughts above earthly things; for it is not enough to bring to this book mind only; it must have heart and soul devoted to it. Then only will the true believer be able to enter without risk the boundless world of the Holy Scriptures, and to obtain the light that is necessary for his salvation. This light, however, is not granted to all equally. God often sends upon earth men to whom a greater light is given, by which they may enlighten the multitude; such are the doctors of the Church, to whom the Lord often speaks in spirit, revealing by direct communication things hidden from all other persons. To them it is given to be the guides and the light of the faithful.'†

In spite, however, of all these precautions, Savonarola

'de substantia, ut diversæ doctorum expositiones; et circa hæc contingit opinari contraria.

'Quia lumine super rationali Scriptura est, non debemus ab expositione Sanctorum recedere, maxime in sensu literali, ne labamur in hæresim; ne etiam ab infidelibus irideamur, et falsa pro veris asseramus: neque etiam debemus eam exponere contrarie ad philosophiam naturalem.'—*Vide Hilarium.*

* He seems to have been himself afraid of this, for we continually find cautions in the notes to be on his guard; as may be seen in some of the passages quoted above, as well as in the following: 'Cave ne voluntas præcedat intellectum, aut etiam intellectus tuus intellectum Dei in Scripturas, ut velis illas exponere sicut prius concepisti et tuo sensui aptare: sed potius earum intellectui te ipsum accommoda, ut semper dicit Hilarius.'

We find this reflection also very often repeated: 'Nec etiam ab infidelibus irideamur et falsa pro veris sumamus, non debemus Scripturas exponere contra philosophiam naturalem veram. Si nos Dominus doceret aliud per lumen naturale, aliud contrarium per lumen supernaturale, aut dicerent homines eum decipere aut errare. Ergo Scriptura est summa philosophia vera, quia verum vero consonat.'—*Ibidem.*

† *Ibidem.*

had placed himself on the edge of a precipice, over which it was difficult for him not to fall. There was nothing which, by help of a system of interpretation so various and so wide, might not be supported upon the authority of the Bible; so that when he allowed himself to be carried away by his boundless imagination, the Scriptures, in place of being a check upon him, served only to stimulate him to greater excesses. And, in fact, whenever his mind, while in a state of exaltation, saw strange visions of the future, whenever he heard in the air voices of evil omen, of scourges threatened to Italy, and the Church, he always found a confirmation in the Bible, which appeared to him more vivid the greater his faith, and the greater the sincerity of his mind. But we shall have other occasions to discuss these matters; it is enough for the present to have given a general explanation of our author's system.

NOTE

On the Biblical Exegesis of Savonarola, and on some copies of the Bible having Notes in his handwriting.

We propose to give a general view of the various modes of interpreting Scripture employed by Savonarola, showing his application of them to the beginning of the Book of Genesis. We have constructed this view from the marginal notes made in his own hand on two Bibles, one in the Magliabechian library, the other in the Riccardian library. The first, which is the more valuable of the two, printed at Basle in 1491, contains a much larger number of annotations, not only on the margins, but also on several leaves added at the beginning and end. These annotations, however, are written in so very minute a character, and are so full of abbreviations, that they are read with great difficulty and require the assistance of a magnifying glass. The notes on the copy in the Riccardian library (Venezia, 1492) are fewer in number, but the handwriting is clearer. They all consist of interpretations made in accordance with the system we have explained, and they give numerous interpretations of many words, and of entire sentences, followed by historical and geographical notes; they also give the signification of some Hebrew words, from which he derives mystical, allegorical, and other meanings. It is remarkable that these notes seldom discuss any purely theological questions, such as were, at a later period, dwelt upon by the Reformers; on the contrary, we have constantly observed that those passages which gave rise to controversies among them, Savonarola has passed over without remark. We shall elsewhere have occasion to refer to this. For the present, we shall only observe, that Savonarola in reading the Bible made his comments in accordance with the system we have described above, and solely for use in his sermons. Frequently these notes fill up the whole of the margin, and

are written between the printed verses, and continued in the added leaves, and always in a strong, even, and microscopical character.

By placing the Magliabechian Bible (at the beginning of which we find the rules for the different kinds of interpretation) side by side with the Riccardian, wherein the same rules are applied to the first chapter of Genesis, we have been enabled to make out the following table. Whoever desires more minute particulars will find an infinite number of them in the above-mentioned Bibles, and in many of the sermons of Savonarola; as, for example, the xxiii. of those on the psalm *Quam bonus* (the 73rd); the interpretations in the notes on the Bible, however, give us a much better idea of this singular exegesis.

We have also to notice that there are two ancient parchment Bibles in St. Mark's Convent, on the margins of which are many annotations in a very minute handwriting, somewhat resembling that of Savonarola. Notwithstanding that resemblance, and in spite of there being in one of them a leaf on which is written *utebatur Hieronymus Savonarola*, we do not believe that these notes are his, but that they are of an older date; judging both from the forms of the letters and from the nature of the notes themselves. We are confirmed in this opinion by seeing in the catalogue *De operibus viri divini, non impressis*, above quoted (Magliabechiana, cod. i. vii. 28), no other Bibles with notes are mentioned except these: 'Bibliæ tres glossatæ; 1° Apud Ferrariam, in Conventu Angelorum; 2° Florentinæ, apud Fratrem Nicholaum de Biliottis; 3° Florentinæ, apud Marcum Simonem de Nigro.' It is not probable that the author of that catalogue, who appears to have been a monk of St. Mark, and who pointed out with much diligence the unpublished writings of Savonarola, should have known of Bibles then in the possession of private persons, and yet should be ignorant of these men existing in his own convent.

TABULAR VIEW OF THE DIFFERENT INTER-

GIVEN IN HIS AUTO-

LITERAL INTERPRETATION.	SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION.	ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION with reference to the Old Testament.
First Day : Heaven, Earth, Light.	Soul, Body, Action, Intellect.	Adam, Eve, the light of Grace.
Second Day : The Firmament.	The Will, between the oppositions of Soul and Body.	Noah's Ark.
Third Day : Separation of the Waters from the Earth. — Dry Places. — Grass and Plants.	The movement of the Passions, and the errors which take possession of the intellect. The Intellect craving for knowledge.	Gentiles separated from the elected people. Multitude of the Elect.
Fourth Day : Sun, Moon, Stars.	Metaphysics and Ethics, Natural and Political Sciences.	High Priest, King, other priests.
Fifth Day : Birds, Fishes.	Contemplation of higher and lower objects.	Maccabees (who always fluctu- ated).
Sixth Day : Animals, Land animals, Beasts of burden. Man in the image of God.	Ferocious instincts. Sense. Man, who controls the Passions.	 Hebrew people (given to avarice in the time of Christ). The Good. Christ (who was the expected of the Old Testament).

N.B.—It is to be observed, that although in the two interpretations, moral and different senses; in one case, e.g., reason means that force which rules the passions, in which we have given, must of necessity be imperfect, because it has been made out

PRETATIONS OF THE BIBLE, BY SAVONAROLA,

GRAPH NOTES THEREON.

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION with reference to the New Testament.	MORAL INTERPRETATION.	ANAGOGICAL INTERPRETATION.
Hebrew people, Gen- tiles, Jesus Christ.	Soul, Body (in the sense of reason and instinct) Light of Grace.	Angels, Men, visions of God.
The Apostles, and other Saints.	Moral strength.	Eternity of bliss and Condemnation.
Tribulations which separate many from the Church.	Struggle of the pas- sions with duty. Reason.	Joy of the blest who were free from tri- bulations.
The sound doctrines of the Church.		Their praises and perfect works.
Pope, Emperor, Doctors.	Laws of Charity an- cient and new, minor precepts.	Christ, the Virgin, the other Blessed.
Contemplative Life, Active Life.	Contemplations of things Divine and human.	Angels, and Men who enter the choir of the Angels.
Anti-Christ, with his followers. Christians given up to earthly things. The Elect of God. The perfect who will abound in the time of anti-Christ.	The bad. Persecutors. He who improves by tribulations.	Those who were per- secutors. The Preachers.

spiritual, the same significations are given, they must always be understood in two the other case, it means that faculty by which truth is apprehended. This division from interpretations that are incomplete, sometimes scarcely indicated.

CHAPTER VIII.

SAVONAROLA SHOWS A DISLIKE TO LORENZO THE MAGNIFICENT—HE PREACHES ON THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. JOHN.

THE people went in such crowds to St. Mark, that the church became too small to contain them; therefore, in Lent 1491, Savonarola preached in the Duomo, and the walls of Santa Maria del Fiore heard his voice for the first time. From that moment he appeared to have become master of the pulpit, and master of the people, for their numbers daily increased, and with redoubled enthusiasm for the preacher. The feelings of the multitude were quite overpowered by the pictures he set before them; the threatenings of punishments to come had a magic power over their minds, and all seemed to be penetrated by presentiments of evil days.

All this began to cause great displeasure to Lorenzo de' Medici, and created some opposition to Savonarola among Lorenzo's friends. One day, five of the principal citizens of Florence* were sent to him, to represent the dangers he was incurring to himself and his convent, and to advise him to be more moderate. Savonarola soon interrupted their address, saying to them, 'I am quite aware that you have not come here of your

* They were, Domenico Bonsi, Guidantonio Vespucci, Paolo Antonio Soderini, Bernardo Rucellai, and Francesco Valori. See Burlamacchi, Pico, &c. It is worthy of remark, that almost all the five became afterwards strong partisans of Savonarola, the last of them among the warmest of his followers.

own accord, but have been sent by Lorenzo. Tell him to prepare to repent of his sins, for the Lord spares no one, and has no fear of the princes of the earth.' The friar was a stout defender of his ecclesiastical independence, and was desirous to put an immediate stop to a custom that had prevailed in St. Mark's of yielding, and even humbly submitting, on all occasions to the Medici. When the above-mentioned citizens warned him that he ran the risk of being exiled, he replied: 'I have no fear of your banishments, for this city is no more than a grain of lentiles on the earth. But although I am a stranger, and Lorenzo is not only a citizen but the first among them, it is I who will remain, and he who shall leave the city.' He afterwards added some remarks upon the condition of Florence, which excited the wonder of those citizens, that he should know so much about the affairs of the state. It was about the same time, that on one occasion, when he was in the sacristy of St. Mark, where several persons happened to be at the time, he affirmed that a change in the affairs of Italy would speedily take place, and that the Magnificent, the Pope, and the King of Naples, were near their last days.*

The ill-humour of the Medici increased to such a degree that Savonarola was led to reflect upon the consequences of their displeasure, and of the constantly in-

* These facts are narrated by Burlamacchi, by Pico, and in the letter of Girolamo Benivieni to Pope Clement VII., to be found in the Riccardian library, cod. 2,022, and published at the end of Varchi's *History*, edit. Le Monnier, 1857, 1858. See also a short account of the *Life of Savonarola*, entitled: *Extracto d'una epistola Fratris Placidi de Cinozzis, ordinis præd. S. Marci de Florentia: de vita et moribus Rev. P. F. Hieronymi Savonarolæ, &c.* (cod. Ricc. 2,053). They are also mentioned by Frà Benedetto in his work on the prophecies of Savonarola, unpublished, but in the Magliabechian library, cl. xxxiv., cod. 7). *Secunda parte delle Profezie dello inclito Martire del Signore Hyeronimo Savonarola*. This last is the second part of a larger work, with the title *Nova Jerusalem*, the first part of which appears to have been lost. In the same codex there is a small portrait of Savonarola, and one of the small authentic miniatures of Frà Benedetto.

creasing opposition of a small but influential body among the citizens; and he was inclined to restrict himself, in his sermons, for a short time at least, to moral precepts and religious subjects. But he found such a change more easy to desire than to put in practice. In his *Compendio di Rivelazioni* he tells us, how vain the struggle within him was to change his mode of preaching. ‘Everything that kept me back from my first design soon became irksome to me, and whenever the thought came into my mind to take another line, it soon made me out of humour with myself. I remember well that upon one occasion, in the year 1491,* when I was preaching in the Duomo, and having composed my sermon entirely upon those visions, I determined to abstain from all allusion to them, and in future to adhere to this resolution; God is my witness that the whole of Saturday and the whole of the succeeding night I lay awake, and could see no other course, no other doctrine. At daybreak, worn out and depressed, by the many hours I had lain awake, while I was praying, I heard a voice that said to me: “Fool that thou art, dost thou not see that it is God’s will that thou shouldst keep to the same path?” the consequence of which was, that on that same day I preached a tremendous sermon.’† Savonarola was certainly born with that kind of eloquence which may be called combative. Fully persuaded that he had a Divine mission, no sooner did he come into the presence of the people than he felt himself in a state of exaltation, and he gave free course to his thoughts; then his fancy was lighted up, his power revived, his energy was redoubled. If, in obedience to duty, he felt that he ought to restrain himself, the bright colours of his imagination would

* In the original it is 1490, following the Florentine custom of beginning the year on the 25th of March.

† *Compendium Revelationum*. See the edition of Quetif, p. 227.

most assuredly have all vanished, the whole vigour of his eloquence would have been subdued.

In July of the same year (1491) he was chosen Prior of St. Mark, and the new and greater responsibility imposed upon him by being thus brought forward, increased his feeling of independence. His first step was a refusal to comply with a bad custom that had been introduced in the convent, that on the election of a new prior he should go to pay homage to the Magnificent. 'I regard,' he said, 'my election as coming from God alone, and to him I shall pay obeisance.' Lorenzo was offended, and said, 'See now! here is a stranger who has come into *my house*, and will not deign to visit me.'* The truth was, not wishing to wage war with the prior of a convent, nor attach too much importance to a friar, he thought to conciliate him by gentle means. He went frequently to hear mass at St. Mark's, and, when it was over, he would take a walk in the garden; but Savonarola would not on that account leave off his studies to bear him company. He judged the character of Lorenzo severely; he knew too well the injuries he had inflicted on public morals; he wished to avoid all approach to a tyrant, in whom he viewed not only the enemy and destroyer of liberty, but also the chief obstacle to an amelioration of the habits of the people, and to their being restored to a Christian course of life. Lorenzo perceiving that the plan he had tried did not succeed, began to send rich presents to the convent, and large contributions for the poor. The effect of this, as might be expected, was only to increase still further the contempt of Savonarola for his moral character; nor did he hesitate to make some contemptuous allusions to it from the pulpit, and to say that such things only made him adhere more firmly to his resolution. Not long afterwards,

* Burlamacchi, p. 20, and following: Pico, Barsanti, Razzi, &c.

he found in the poor's box a large amount of gold coin ; and as this could have come from no one else than Lorenzo, he sent it to 'The Congregation of the Benevolent Men of St. Martin,'* that they might distribute it among the poor, saying that copper and silver were quite enough for all the wants of the convent. 'And thus,' says Burlamacchi, 'Lorenzo must have at last perceived that this was not land in which to plant a vineyard.†

The Magnificent, however, was not a man to give up so soon ; and he forthwith sent for Gennazzano to resume his sermons, in order to check the increasing influence of the orator of the people. That friar had all the impetuosity, the malignity, and the hypocrisy, usually met with in the pedants of those days ; up to this time he had congratulated Savonarola on the success he had obtained ; but no sooner did Lorenzo engage him to oppose the friar than he set to work with all his might. He gave out that on Ascension Day he would preach on the passage of the Bible : '*Non est vestrum nosse tempora vel momenta.*' 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons.' (Acts i. 7.) All Florence was full of this, and a vast crowd went to hear Gennaz-

* This is a charitable institution, founded in 1444, by Saint Antonino, a Dominican friar, afterwards Archbishop of Florence, which, from its benevolent acts, soon got the name of '*I Buonomini*,' '*Di San Martino*' being added, because the administrators met in the Church of that name. Its object was to relieve the poor *who are ashamed to beg*. This most benevolent society has existed, without interruption, from its foundation to the present day. The funds were at first supplied by voluntary contributions, and have been added to, from time to time, by legacies and grants from the government. Saint Antonino himself drew up the regulations by which the Society continues to be governed, the chief of which is, that an impenetrable secret is to be kept of every one relieved. Were this not observed, the whole object of the founder would be frustrated, namely, the relief of the poor who are ashamed to beg, *i poveri vergognosi*.

For a full account of this institution, see *Storia degli Stabilimento di Beneficenza e d'Istruzione elementare gratuita nella Città di Firenze*, scritta da Luigi Passerini. Le Monnier, 1853.—TR.

† Burlamacchi, p. 20, and following ; Barsanti, &c.

zano's sermon. He, however, allowed himself to be led away by his passion, and began by making all sorts of accusations against Savonarola, calling him a vain and false prophet, a disseminator of scandal and insubordination among the people; to such a length did he carry his insolence and coarseness of language that he quite disgusted his hearers: so that in that one day he lost more reputation than all he had gained by many years of hard labour. Thus that which Lorenzo intended should be a defeat ended in the triumph of Savonarola; who on that very day had preached upon the same text, interpreting it as confirmatory of his doctrine; and he was then left master of the field, for Gennazzano did not dare to continue his sermons.* He pretended to treat the matter with indifference, invited Savonarola to his monastery, where they celebrated together a solemn mass, and exchanged all sorts of courtesies; but the humiliation he had met with left a deep impression on his mind. That he who had been considered the first preacher in Italy, and had annihilated Savonarola on his first coming to Florence, should now find himself publicly vanquished and defeated, was too much to bear without rancour. From that moment he cherished a deep hatred for Savonarola, vowed eternal vengeance, and never ceased to stir up against him fresh dangers and new enemies; until at last, he succeeded in being one of the chief authors of his ruin.

Lorenzo now perceiving himself entirely foiled, and feeling the disease coming upon him which afterwards carried him to the grave, and wearied with striving against a man whom, in spite of himself, he daily rated more highly, now left him to preach without hindrance.

We have as yet taken no notice of other sermons of

* Pico, Burlamacchi, Barsanti, Razzi, &c.

Savonarola, because the first that were printed were those he delivered on the First Epistle of St. John, and which could not belong to an earlier year than 1491. We must now, however, turn our attention to them. It is, in truth, an arduous undertaking to give an account of a collection of sermons, the form itself of the work presenting neither unity of subject nor any connection of parts; and, if to this be added the somewhat ill-arranged nature of the mind and studies of the author, it will readily be understood how difficult it must be to find any firm footing from which to start, or to say under what heads the account is to be rendered. He always begins with a quotation from the Bible, around which he gathers all his theological ideas in conformity with his system of interpretation which we have described above, bringing in their support some new passage taken from the Bible. We have thus a heterogeneous mass of ill-assorted materials, amidst which the reader becomes lost. Suddenly, however, Savonarola sets himself entirely free; his discourse has turned upon some subject of the time, deeply interesting to himself and his audience; his fancy is kindled, gigantic images rise up before him, his voice becomes more sonorous, his gestures more animated, his eyes seem to flash fire, and from that moment he becomes original, a great and powerful orator. But soon he falls back again into that artificial world of ideas, ill-connected and ill-digested, to rise again from them, and again to fall back, never being able to succeed in freeing himself entirely from them, nor ever allowing them to be thoroughly dominant over him. In this way, whoever read and diligently examine those sermons will be obliged to confess that Savonarola was born an orator, but that he was wholly wanting in the art of oratory. Hence, when the subject was so deeply interesting to him as to have complete mastery over him, nature took the

place of art, and then only was he eloquent. If we compare him with his most renowned contemporaries, such as Attavanti and Frà Roberto da Lecce, who were either drowned in scolastics, or if they escaped from these, descended to such low scurrilities of language as to make one doubt whether they had been uttered in a church, then Savonarola will appear a giant power, even in his less felicitous moments. And indeed, if we examine his sermons patiently, we find in the least eloquent pages a vast number of subordinate ideas, and special remarks, which reflect high merit on the speaker, disseminated throughout them, even when they detract from the merits of the orator.

We find an example of this last remark in the nineteen sermons on the First Epistle of St. John, which, although the dates of them are uncertain, appear to have been all delivered during advent of 1491. In them the author expounds at great length the mysteries of the mass, with precepts and advice highly useful for the religious edification of the people. An account of the order and of the whole matter contained in them would give a very imperfect idea in comparison with that which we obtain by a selection of those thoughts and passages which may be said to be representatives of the whole. Among the many that might be pointed out, there are some relating to the *word of life*, which the orator appears to have dwelt upon with complacency. In the present day they might appear to many to be artificial and not of much importance, but whoever considers them with attention, bearing in mind the theological studies and religious discipline of that period, could not fail to discover much originality; and would perceive that, in respect of intellectual power, Savonarola was vastly superior to all his contemporaries. He was in the habit of discoursing in the following manner:—‘Our speech proceeds from us separated and diversified by a

succession of syllables ; and thus, while one part of it lives the rest becomes nothing ; when the whole sentence has been uttered, it ceases to exist. But the word or the saying of the Lord has no parts, it proceeds as a whole in its essence, it is spread through creation, lives and exists for ever, like the light of heaven with which it is associated. Thus, it is the *word of life*, or rather it is life itself, and is one with the Father. We, it is true, may accept this word in different senses ; at one time we understand by it existence ; at another time the employments of living beings ;—thus, we say that this man lives for science ; that singing is the life of the bird. But life, in truth, exists only as one, and is God himself, for in Him alone all things have their existence. And this is that life of the blessed which is the final end of man, and in which he is to find infinite and eternal felicity. Life on this earth is not only imperfect but cannot be entirely enjoyed, because it is wanting in unity. If your delight is in riches, you must renounce that of the senses ; if you give yourself up to the senses, you must renounce knowledge ; and if you wish to enjoy knowledge, you cannot enjoy public employments. But in a heavenly life, all pleasures are enjoyed, because they will be in the sight of God, and that is supreme felicity.’*

The author proceeds to develope those ideas at length, but he frequently goes off to declaim against the evil habits of the age, condemning one by one the prevailing vices. For example, he condemns gambling thus :—‘ If you see any in these days addicted to gambling,

* *Sermoni sulla I. Epistola di San Giovanni*. See the whole of the twelve sermons, and in the fifth and sixth *passim*. We quote the edition published at Prato in 1846, because it is more easily obtained by those who wish to see the originals. We must observe, however, that it is mutilated in some parts, so that the diligent reader must not refer to it without being able to compare it with the Venetian editions, that in Latin of 1536, and in Italian of 1547.

‘believe not that they are Christians; they are worse
‘than infidels; they are ministers of the devil, and
‘celebrate his festivals. They are misers, blasphemers,
‘swearers, detractors of the good report of others,
‘slanderers, hated by God, robbers, murderers, and
‘full of all iniquity. I do not allow you to gamble in
‘any manner during these holidays; you must be
‘constant in prayer, continually rendering thanks to
‘God, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He
‘who games will be accursed, and he that permits
‘gaming will be accursed; cursed is the father who games
‘in the presence of his son; cursed is the mother who
‘games in the presence of her daughter. Therefore,
‘whoever thou art, who either gamblest or permittest
‘gambling, thou art accursed; I tell thee that thou wilt be
‘accursed in the city, in the fields, in thy harvests, in
‘that which thou mayest leave when thou art gone, in the
‘fruits of thy body and of thy land, in thy herds of cattle,
‘and thy flocks of sheep; thou wilt be accursed in thy
‘goings out and thy comings in.’* He thus declaims
against usury and immoderate gains: — ‘You, then,
‘through avarice, lead an evil life, both you and your
‘soul; and you have found many ways of profiting by
‘money, and in many exchanges, which you call regular,
‘but are most unjust; and have corrupted public func-
‘tionaries and magistrates. No one can convince you
‘that usury or unjust exchanges are sinful; rather you
‘defend yourselves to the perdition of your souls. No
‘one is now ashamed to lend upon usury, rather those are
‘held to be fools who do otherwise; and thus in you is
‘fulfilled the saying of Isaiah, “They declare their sin
‘as Sodom, they hide it not,” and that of Jeremiah,
‘“Thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be
‘ashamed.” Thou sayest gain is a good and a happy

* Sermon x, p. 93.

‘ life, and Christ says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for
 ‘ theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Thou sayest that a
 ‘ happy life consists in pleasures and voluptuousness, and
 ‘ Christ says, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall
 ‘ be comforted.” Thou sayest a happy life consists in
 ‘ glory, and Christ says, “Blessed are ye when men shall
 ‘ revile you and persecute you.” Life has made itself
 ‘ manifest, and no one follows after it, no one longs for
 ‘ it, no one learns it. Christ therefore laments over you,
 ‘ for he endured much labour to make this life manifest,
 ‘ that all might be saved, and has just ground of com-
 ‘ plaint against you, for he declares by the mouth of the
 ‘ prophet, “We are weary with calling, my tongue cleaves
 ‘ to the roof of my mouth, for all day I have exhorted
 ‘ you with the voice of the preacher, and no one listens.”’ *

At other times Savonarola addresses himself to the hearts of the people, and by touching their feelings, tries to lead them to a better course of life. ‘ Oh that I could
 ‘ persuade you to leave off earthly things and follow after
 ‘ those which are eternal! Most assuredly if God would
 ‘ grant such grace to me and to you, I should deem my-
 ‘ self happy in this life; but this is a gift from God. “No
 ‘ one can come to me,” says the Lord, “if the Father
 ‘ does not bring him near to Him.” I cannot enlighten
 ‘ you inwardly, I can only influence you through your
 ‘ ears; but if the intellect be not enlightened by that
 ‘ which is within, the affections are not warmed.’ † ‘ And
 what can do that but the word of God? Labour then in-
 wardly, and do as is done with the wheat, which is ground
 and sifted that the flour may be got from it. If you do
 not this, of what will it avail you to have your granaries
 filled? What will the treasures of the Holy Scriptures
 avail you unless you search for their spiritual meaning?
 I will then labour to do the work of the apostles, making

* Sermon v. pp. 47, 50.

† Sermon vi. p. 52.

known to you the sacred volume, and to you it will belong to be doers, and not hearers only, of the word of God.*

But Savonarola rose, indeed, above himself when expounding the Gospel of the Epiphany, and displayed not only imagination and warmth of feeling, but great skill, in the composition of this sermon. ‘Now, when ‘Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of ‘Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the ‘east to Jerusalem, saying “Where is He that is born ‘king of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, ‘and are come to worship Him.” Mark the words, and ‘observe the mysteries. Behold, then, that He by whom ‘all things were made has this day a temporal birth. ‘Thus the beginning of all things, after He had created ‘all things, was born, and had for his mother a young ‘virgin. Behold, He who holds the world in his hand ‘is brought forth from a virgin. Behold, He who is ‘above all things begins by having a native land: He ‘begins by becoming of the same country with men, a ‘companion of men, a brother of men, and a son of man. ‘Behold how God cometh near unto you. Seek then ‘the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while ‘He is near. This is certainly the bread that falls from ‘heaven and refreshes the hearts of angels and men, so ‘that it is the bread common to men and angels.

‘Listen, therefore, brethren, and be not as vagabonds ‘are. Open your eyes and see who they are who are ‘coming. I declare unto you, O men, and let my voice ‘be heard by the sons of men. *Behold the wise men,* ‘*behold Chaldeans*, behold men who were not born ‘among Christians; behold men who were never baptized; behold men who were never instructed in the laws ‘of the gospel; behold men who never received the many

* Sermon v. p. 43, 44.

‘ sacraments of the Church ; behold men who never heard
‘ the voice of a preacher. *Behold the wise men of the*
‘ *East* coming from a wicked and perverse generation,
‘ from distant lands ; not daunted by loss of money, by
‘ toil, or by dangers. *They came.* When did they come ?
‘ When the world was rife with idolatry, when men wor-
‘ shipped stocks and stones ; when the whole earth was
‘ hid in darkness, when all men were filled with iniquity.
‘ When did they come ? When Jesus was a little child,
‘ when he lay on straw, when he yet was weak, when he
‘ had worked no miracles. *We saw His star in the East,*
‘ the star which showed His advent. Behold the men who
‘ saw the star when there were no other miracles ; the
‘ blind man had not been made to see, nor the dead raised ;
‘ no other visible miracle had occurred. *And we are come*
‘ *to worship Him.* We have made a long journey, we
‘ have come to adore the footsteps of that little one. If
‘ we could but see him, if we could worship him, if we
‘ could offer our gifts unto him, we should be blessed.
‘ We have left our native land, we have left our parents,
‘ we have left our friends, we have left kingdoms, we
‘ have left great riches, we have thus come from a distant
‘ land, through many dangers, in this great haste, solely
‘ to worship Him. This sufficeth us, this we value more
‘ highly than our kingdoms, this we long for more than
‘ life itself. What then, my brethren, shall we reply to
‘ all these things ? What, through our faith, shall we
‘ say ? Oh, living faith ! Oh, boundless love ! But behold
‘ the perfidy of the Jews ; how great the hardness of
‘ their hearts ; for neither by miracles, nor by prophecies,
‘ nor by such a voice, were they moved.

‘ But why should we have directed our discourse
‘ against the Jews, and not rather against ourselves ?
‘ Because we see the mote in our brother’s eye, and per-
‘ ceive not the beam in our own ! Behold, the Lord
‘ Jesus is not at this day a little child in the manger, but

‘ great in heaven. He has preached, has worked miracles, was crucified and rose again, sits on the right hand of the Father, has sent the Holy Spirit upon earth, has sent forth the Apostles, has subjugated the nations.’ Already the kingdom of heaven is laid open to all; behold its gates are opened; the Lord has led the way. The Apostles and the martyrs have followed after. But ye are lazy, all labour oppresses ye, and ye have no desire to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Behold how avarice increases daily, the whirlpool of usury enlarges, luxury has contaminated all things, pride rises to the very clouds. Ye are the children of the devil, and wish to fulfil your father’s desires. Oh, do not the words of Scripture itself declare how little good is to be expected from you! Behold I go to a people who did not know me, and did not call upon my name; I have stretched out my hand to an unbelieving generation, which walks in the path of perdition, which provokes me to anger.*

This description of the wise men coming from distant countries, through many dangers, to seek Jesus while yet a child, while Christians continue indifferent to him, now he is grown up, and in the splendour of his glory, and opening wide his arms to invite them to come unto him, was one of those appeals that had most effect in exciting the people to a state of rapture, and the whole discourse is among the best that Savonarola composed. Such instances of purely native and spontaneous eloquence were wholly unknown in that age of erudite and imitative oratory.† The somewhat too simple and

* Sermon xvii. pp. 164-9.

† Cerretani, in his *Storia di Firenze*, whose autograph manuscript is in the Magliabechian library, there speaks of the sermons of Savonarola. ‘ He introduced almost a new manner of declaring the word of God, that is, after the Apostolic manner, without dividing his sermon into parts, not proposing questions, avoiding all the ornaments of eloquence: his sole object was to expound some passage in the Old Testament, and to introduce the simplicity of the primitive Church.’

ingenuous eloquence that we find in the sermons of the thirteenth century had disappeared, such as those of Bernardino of Siena and his followers. The preachers, as we have already said, if not of the grammarian class, like Gennazzano, were more like vulgar players, and spoke a kind of scholastic jargon which was no longer understood. Hence the secret of Savonarola's great success is entirely to be traced to the affectionate warmth he himself felt, and with which he inspired the people. His voice alone had a familiar and domestic tone;* he spoke in a language that touched the hearts of the multitude, he discoursed on matters that nearly concerned them; he alone fought sincerely for truth, had a fervent love for all virtue, and felt deeply the misfortunes of those whom he was addressing; and therefore in that century he alone was eloquent. Since the cessation of the holy eloquence of the Christian Fathers and Doctors, no other voice but his had been found worthy to be transmitted to posterity. To him it is due that sermons were again held in honour, and received a new life, and hence he may be termed the first of modern orators.

Guicciardini in his *Storia inedita di Firenze* says, that after having read and considered the sermons of Savonarola, he found them most eloquent, an eloquence natural and inartificial. He adds, that for ages there had not appeared a man so learned in the Holy Scriptures, and that while no man ever succeeded to preach in Lent, in Florence, for more than two successive years, Savonarola was able to continue for several years, with increased admiration of the people. As we have said above, Guicciardini was one of the greatest admirers of Savonarola, of whose sermons he made an abridgement, written in his own hand. His judgement upon them is so much the more valuable, as he was always a partizan of the Medici, was certainly not a particularly religious man, still less a fanatic.¹

* See the following note p. 137.

¹ For further particulars by Guicciardini, see Appendix D.—Tr.

NOTE

On the Language in which the Sermons of Savonarola were delivered.

From what has been said, it will have been seen how much M. Perrens and many other writers have been mistaken in believing that Savonarola very frequently preached in Latin. They have been led into this error by having seen that many sermons, and particularly those on the First Epistle of St. John, both those in his autograph, and in the first edition, are in Latin. When the sermons were taken down at the time of their being delivered, as was the case at a later period, by Lorenzo Violi, they were always in Italian, but when Savonarola himself wrote them out for the press, it was easier for him to write them in Latin. So much did he always prefer to write in that language, that all his notes on the margins of his Bibles are in Latin, while in some drafts, or first sketches of his sermons, the autograph manuscripts of which are in the Magliabechian library, it may very evidently be seen, that when he wished to give the final form to a thought, so as to introduce it into the sermon he was about to print, he then invariably wrote it in Italian; but when he first noted down an idea, so as to call it to his recollection, he always made use of Latin. He wrote many of his works in Latin, but he himself made, as it were, a second edition in Italian *for the general body of believers*, words which he prefixes to all the translations of his works, and which show how unfounded are the opinions of those who would have us believe that Latin was then universally understood. As to his writing in Latin, it was common to all Europe, and was the only language employed by the learned; so that in theological

and philosophical works, there was a scientific language constructed from the Latin, and to have written in Italian, it would have been necessary to begin by inventing new terms, new modes of expression, and almost creating a new style.

That we may not prolong these remarks, we shall only notice, that the sermons on Noah's ark, delivered in 1494, were taken down in Italian; but in order to give them *a literary form* (as the publisher of them himself informs us), they were translated into Latin—although a very barbarous Latin—and thus saw the light. The sermons on Job were also taken down in Italian, and then translated into Latin; but that translation was retranslated into the vulgar tongue *in which they were composed and preached*, as the editor informs us; he being desirous that on this occasion they should be published in Italian. These facts ought to convince us that although we meet with sermons of Savonarola in Latin, although in the original edition, and in his own handwriting, they afford no argument for the belief that they were spoken from the pulpit in Latin.

CHAPTER IX.

DEATH OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI AND OF POPE INNOCENT VIII.

—ELECTION OF ALEXANDER VI.—JOURNEY OF SAVONAROLA TO BOLOGNE.—SEPARATION OF THE CONVENT OF ST. MARK FROM THE LOMBARD CONGREGATION. —REFORMS IN THE CONVENT.

[1492—1493.]

LORENZO the Magnificent had removed to his charming villa Careggi. A severe internal disease was consuming his vitals, and in the early part of April, 1492, there was no longer any hope of recovery. His medical attendants tried every remedy afforded by the healing art, but in vain; Lazzaro da Ficino, a physician of Padua, was sent for, but with no better success; his marvellous draughts of distilled precious stones produced no effect. The few friends who in those last days remained faithful to Lorenzo showed him the greatest affection; Ficino and Pico visited him constantly; Politian never left his bedside. This last had a sincere love for his patron; he felt that he was about to lose the friend to whom he owed everything in life, and to whom he was bound by stronger ties of gratitude than to any other being on earth. He tried in vain to conceal his grief, to repress his tears; and when Lorenzo fixed his eyes upon him, with the mysterious look of a dying man, he was no longer master of his feelings, and sobbed aloud.*

* Politiani *Epistolæ*, Jacopo Antiquario, xv. Kalendas junias, 1492.

These proofs of affection, added to the solemnity of the last hours of Lorenzo, having now turned his thoughts to religion with sincerity, he seemed to be a changed being. When the sacrament was brought to him, he made an effort to rise, and was anxious to go and meet the priest, supported on the arms of his attendants; but the priest, observing his extraordinary agitation, desired that he should be taken back to his bed, where it was with no small difficulty that he could be restored to a state of tranquillity. His memory called up many sad and fearful thoughts of his past life, and in proportion as the last hour drew near, his sins appeared to increase in magnitude, and to assume a more threatening aspect. The last offices of religion afforded no alleviation of his terror; for he had lost all faith in men, and did not even believe in the sincerity of his own confessor. Accustomed to find everyone obedient to his nod, to be submissive to his will, he could not persuade himself that anyone would dare to refuse him absolution; and thus he did not look to that for any diminution of the weight by which his conscience was oppressed; and the torments of remorse continued unabated:—‘No one ever ventured to utter a resolute no to me’—he said to himself; and what at one time had been his pride, was now his martyrdom.

All at once, however, the stern aspect of Savonarola recurred to his mind; he remembered that that man had never yielded either to his threats or his flatteries: ‘I know no honest friar but him,’ he said, and expressed a wish to confess to him. Savonarola was immediately sent for from St. Mark’s; he was astonished at so unusual and unexpected a summons, and maintained that his going to Careggi would be useless, for that he was certain that anything he could say would not be acceptable to Lorenzo. But when the alarming state of the sick man was described to him, and

that he had expressed a wish to confess to him, he set out immediately.

Lorenzo on that day was more conscious than he had yet been that his death was near at hand. He had called his son Piero to him, had given him his parting advice and had bade him a last farewell. When his friends, who were not allowed to be present at that interview, returned to the chamber, and had made his son retire, as his presence agitated Lorenzo too much, he expressed a wish to see Pico della Mirandola again; who immediately hastened to him. It appeared as if the sweet expression of that benevolent and gentle young man had soothed him a little, for he said to him, 'I should have died unhappy if I had not been first cheered by the sight of thy face.' His countenance became more serene, and he talked almost cheerfully; he even began to smile and joke with his friend. Pico had no sooner retired than Savonarola entered, and approached respectfully the bed of the dying Lorenzo, who said that there were three sins he wished to confess to him, and for which he asked absolution: the sacking of Volterra; the money taken from the *Monte delle Fanciulle*, which had caused so many deaths; and the blood shed after the conspiracy of the Pazzi. While saying this, he again became agitated, and Savonarola tried to calm him, by frequently repeating, 'God is good, God is merciful.' Lorenzo had scarcely left off speaking, when Savonarola added,—'Three things are required of you.'—'And what are they, Father?' replied Lorenzo. Savonarola's countenance became grave, and, raising the fingers of his right hand, he thus began: 'First, it is necessary that you should have a full and lively faith in the mercy of God.'—'That I have most fully.' 'Secondly, it is necessary to restore that which you unjustly took away, or enjoin your sons to restore it for you.' This requirement appeared to cause him surprise and grief; however,

with an effort, he gave his consent, by a nod of his head. Savonarola then rose up, and while the dying prince shrank with terror in his bed, the confessor seemed to rise above himself when saying, 'Lastly, you must restore liberty to the people of Florence.' His countenance was solemn, his voice almost terrible; his eyes, as if to read the answer, remained fixed intensely on those of Lorenzo; who, collecting all the strength that nature had left him, turned his back on him scornfully, without uttering a word. And thus Savonarola left him without giving him absolution; and the Magnificent, lacerated by remorse, soon after breathed his last, on the 8th of April, 1492.*

The death of Lorenzo caused a great change in the affairs of Tuscany and Italy. The skill he had displayed in all his transactions, the dexterity and prudence with which he had conducted negotiations with various potentates, so as to keep them united, had made him a kind of moderator in the political affairs of all Italy, and Florence had become the centre of Italian politics. His son Piero soon showed himself to be in all respects the very opposite of his father. Personally strong-built and handsome, he gave himself up entirely to pleasures with women, and to bodily exercises. He had great facility in composing unpremeditated verses (*improvisi*), and had a graceful and agreeable delivery; but all his ambition lay in excelling in horsemanship and tournaments, in games of foot-ball, boxing, and tennis, in which he considered himself so great an adept as to challenge persons who had much skill in those exercises, and who on that account had come to Florence. He inherited from his mother all the pride of the Orsini family, but had not inherited from his father that modesty and civility of manner which had tended so much to make him popu-

* See the Note at the end of the chapter.

lar. On the contrary, his manners were so rude as to give offence to everyone; at times he yielded to such violent fits of passion that, on one occasion he gave his cousin a slap in the face. Such things were held in Florence to be far more intolerable than an open violation of the laws, and were quite enough to make him many enemies.*

Nor was it private individuals only whom he offended; he had in one way or another disgusted all the princes of Italy, and Florence lost the pre-eminence which Lorenzo had so well known how to preserve. He neglected all the affairs of the government, and gave himself no concern with anything, except how to find an opportunity of getting the power more and more into his own hands; he was constantly destroying some of those semblances of liberty which the Magnificent had been so careful not to meddle with, and to which the people were much attached. Hence a general discontent began to prevail among the citizens, and an opposition party was formed, which from day to day was joined by many of those who, in Lorenzo's time, were most devoted to the Medici. An expectation now arose of a change, which became more and more desirable and necessary; for Piero finding himself abandoned by the eminent citizens, was constrained to have recourse to new and incapable persons.

The multitude thronged round the pulpit of Savonarola, who came to be considered the preacher of the party opposed to the Medici. His having been with Lorenzo at the time of his death, and who had wished to confess to him, raised him prodigiously in the opinion of all those who had been the admirers of that prince, and who kept aloof from his son, on account of the

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*; Guicciardini, *Storia d' Italia*; Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital. &c.*

violence of his manners and the uncertainty of his political views. The people, moreover, recollected how Savonarola, in the sacristy of St. Mark, and in the presence of some most respectable citizens,* had predicted the approaching death of Lorenzo, the Pope, and the king of Naples; a part of which prediction they had just seen fulfilled, and another seemed on the point of being so.

The vital powers of Innocent VIII. rapidly gave way; he had for some time fallen into a kind of somnolency, which was sometimes so profound that the whole court believed him to be dead. All means to awaken the exhausted vitality had been resorted to in vain, when a Jew doctor proposed to try to do so by the transfusion, by a new instrument, of the blood of a young person; an experiment that hitherto had only been made on animals. Accordingly, the blood of the decrepid old pontiff was passed into the veins of a youth, whose blood was transferred into those of the old man. The experiment was tried three times, and at the cost of the lives of three boys, probably from air getting into their veins, but without any effect to save that of the Pope. He expired on the 25th of April, 1492, and, without loss of time, they set about the election of his successor.†

The corruption in the Roman court had reached such a pitch, that the same enormities which, at one time, were practised in secret, and had then given rise to much

* They were Alessandro Acciaïoli, Cosimo Rucellai and Carlo Carnesecchi. This prediction, as we have already mentioned, is to be found in Burlamacchi; in Barsanti, in the letter of Benivieni to Clement VII.; in Cinozzi, *Extracto*, &c., MS. Riccardiano, quoted above; in Frà Benedetto, *Secunda parte delle prophetie dello inclito Martire del Signore Hyeronimo Savonarola ferrarese*, &c., MS. Magliabechiano, quoted above. Savonarola himself several times alludes to it in his sermons.

† Infessuræ, *Diarium*; Burchardi, *Diarium*; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*; Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital.*; Leo; Muratori, &c.

scandal and grief, were now practised in open day without exciting any surprise. The conclave consisted of not more than twenty-three cardinals; the election became a mere traffic in votes, and Roderigo Borgia was the successful candidate, being the cardinal who could offer the largest sum of money, and promise the largest number of preferments. The Romans looked on with indifference, when they saw a mule loaded with gold led into the palace of Ascanio Sforza, who had been Borgia's most powerful rival; and people spoke of all the details of the traffic as ordinary and natural events.

The name of Alexander VI., assumed by the new pope, is too notorious for evil to make it necessary for us to dwell at any length upon his history. A Spaniard by birth, he was originally an advocate in Valencia. His great facility in public speaking, a marvellous aptitude for all matters of business, especially of finance and administration, had, step by step, raised him to the rank of a cardinal. One passion which more than any other distinguished him, was an insatiable love of money, which brought him continually into an intimate connection with Moors, Turks, and Jews; disregarding every prejudice and custom held in respect in that age. By such means he acquired that immense wealth which raised him to the papacy. He delighted in an unrestrained and sensual life; and he had always been governed by some woman. When he became pope it was the notorious Vannozza, whose mother had been his mistress; at a later period he was ruled by his own daughter Lucrezia Borgia: a connection which gave rise to those scandals and sanguinary jealousies which rendered the name of that family a disgrace to human nature. Such was the character of a man who was raised to the papacy; the announcement of it was received with universal dismay throughout all Italy; Ferdinand of Naples could not restrain his tears, a thing

that never happened to him before, even on the death of his own children.*

But, notwithstanding all this, the beginning of this pontificate seemed to belie the opinion that had been formed of it. The revenues of the Holy See were for the first time administered with some degree of order. Crimes that during preceding years had been committed in the Campagna and the provinces to such an extent as to amount to almost a hundred a week, were repressed with severity, and they all at once diminished in a wonderful manner. But it was soon apparent that all this was done with one object; to extort from the subjects a larger sum of money, and to create more securely established principalities for the sons of the Pope, who had made themselves notorious by their shameless profligacy, and the atrocity of their crimes.†

Such events filled the minds of men with alarm, and the future was looked forward to with trepidation. All eyes were involuntarily turned to him who had always foretold that misfortunes were coming upon Italy and the Church, and his predictions seemed to be miraculously fulfilled. Two of the princes whose deaths he had foretold were already in their graves; the third, from age and infirmities, could not be long of following them; and the Church had not for ages been in so deplorable a state. The three famous *conclusions* passed therefore from mouth to mouth; the unhappiness of true believers led them to yield to them implicit faith; and the strange terror that universally prevailed, spread the name of Savonarola far and wide. For himself, he was at once the cause and the victim of these alarms. Perceiving that almost everyone was beginning to adopt his ideas, he became more than ever convinced of their

* Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*.

† Guicciardini, *Storia*; Machiavelli, *Legazioni*; Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital.*; Michelet, *Renaissance*; Burchardi, *Diarium*.

truth, and was raised to a still higher pitch of excitement. The destined future now appeared to him to be near at hand; he read and re-read the prophets; he preached with increased fervour; nor is it to be wondered at, that, in such a state of mind, visions more frequently arose before him.

In that same year, 1492, while preaching in Advent, he had a dream which had all the appearance of a vision, and which he did not for a moment hesitate to believe was a divine revelation. He seemed to see in the sky a hand with a drawn sword, on which was written *Gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter* — (The sword of the Lord on the earth, and speedily). He heard clearly and distinctly voices promising mercy to the good, and threatening punishments to the wicked, and proclaiming that the anger of God was at hand. All of a sudden, the sword turned towards the earth, the air became dark, showers of swords, and arrows, and fire descended, and fearful thunders were heard; whilst the whole earth became a prey to wars, famines, and pestilences. The vision disappeared with a command to Savonarola to threaten men with these punishments, to inspire them with the fear of God, and to induce them to pray to the Lord that he would send to the Church just pastors, who would take care of the souls that had wandered from the right path.* This vision was afterwards represented in an infinite number of engravings and medals; which were considered to be almost symbolical of Savonarola and his doctrine.

During those months, Savonarola was unexpectedly absent from Florence; in April, 1492, he was at Pisa, where he preached some sermons in the monastery of St. Catherine, and formed an intimate friendship with Stefano da Codiponte, who became one of his most

* *Compend. Revelationum*, edition of Quetif, p. 231 and following.

faithful and affectionate followers.* At a later period, in Lent 1493, he was still farther away, for he was preaching at Bologna. It would appear that Piero de' Medici being annoyed by this too popular preacher, whose sermons were attended by his enemies, contrived, by means of the friar's superiors in Rome and Milan, to get him removed from Florence for some time. The friars of St. Mark were much grieved at this, and Savonarola sought to console them by a letter he thus addressed to them: 'I always keep in mind your tender love, and often speak of it with Frà Basilio, my much loved son, and wholly your brother in Christ Jesus. We are very solitary; we are like two turtle doves waiting for the return of spring, to retire to a warm climate, where we used to live among the flowers and joys of the Holy Spirit. But if you feel so sad that you cannot exist without me, your love is but imperfect, seeing that it is God who has removed me from you for awhile.'†

He preached at Bologna, but with no good will. Sent from Florence for being too great a friend of the people, he found himself in a city ruled by the iron hand of a Bentivoglio, so that it was very necessary for him to keep within due bounds. Being obliged to preach in a manner entirely in opposition to the impulses of his nature, he was coldly received, and was called 'a simple

* This was a young man from Liguria, who had come to study law at Pisa. Weary of the world, he desired, in April, 1492, to assume the garb of a monk; and a few days after, weary of the cloisters, he desired to leave it. It was just at this time that Savonarola came to Pisa, and Codiponte was moved by his discourses to such a degree, that he not only returned to his first purpose, but adhered firmly to it, and became so strict in his religious observances that, a month afterwards, Savonarola thought it necessary to reprove his excessive zeal, which he did in a letter of May 23, 1492, found in the Riccardian library (cod. 2053). See also the *Annali del Monastero di Santa Caterina di Pisa*, published in the *Archivio Storico*. See Appendix E.

† This letter, so full of affection and Christian counsel, is given by Quetif, vol. ii. p. 99.

man, and fit only to preach to women.’* There was, however, a numerous audience, for his name had brought crowds. Among them was the wife of Bentivoglio, who was in the habit of coming very late, bringing with her a great retinue of ladies, gentlemen, and pages, so that she every time disturbed his sermon. This was one of those irregularities which he would by no means tolerate. The first two or three times he stopped in his discourse, thinking that that might be a sufficient reproof; but the disturbance rather became greater; upon which he made some allusions to the sin of disturbing the faithful in their religious duties. But the proud dame, thus irritated, came every day with greater noise, and more insolent disrespect. At last, Savonarola, one morning, while in all the fervour of his discourse, and experiencing the same interruption, could refrain no longer, and said with a loud voice—‘Behold, behold the devil, who comes to interrupt the word of God.’† The lady was so enraged, that she ordered two of her attendants to murder him in the very pulpit; but courage to perpetrate such an enormity failed them. She could not, however, bear the thought of having been humiliated by a friar, and sent two other of her satellites to his cell, to do him some grievous injury. Savonarola, however, received them with such undaunted courage, and addressed them in so resolute and commanding a tone, that they listened, and went away confounded.‡ Fortunately, Lent was nearly over, so that he very soon took leave of the people. Wishing, however, to give them some proof that he was not easily intimidated, he said publicly from the pulpit:—‘This evening I shall set out for Florence, with my walking-stick and wooden flask, and shall sleep at Pianoro. If anyone has anything

* Burlamacchi, Barsanti, &c.

† Idem.

‡ Idem.

‘to say to me, let him come before the hour of my departure. Know that my death is not to be celebrated in Bologna.’*

When he and his companion Frà Basilio had set out on their way to Florence, he meditated on the altered condition of that city, on the discontent of the people, on the ill-will of Piero, and on the difficulties he should have to encounter in his future preachings. While his thoughts were thus occupied, and while they were yet several miles from Florence, he was so overcome by fatigue, that he had not strength to continue his journey, nor could he take any food. When lo! there came to his help the vision of an unknown man, who restored his strength and courage, and who, after accompanying him to the St. Gallo gate, said to him, ‘Remember that thou doest that for which thou hast been sent by God,’ and having said this, disappeared.† It is not surprising that Savonarola, overpowered by weariness, should see another vision. Each reader must decide for himself what credit is to be given to such legends; we give them as parts of the history of those times, when men of the strongest minds believed in such things;‡ and more than all the rest, Savonarola himself; as we have remarked elsewhere, and as we shall have occasion to narrate at greater length hereafter.

* Burlamacchi, 26, 27; Barsanti.

† Burlamacchi describes this vision as having been seen on the journey of Savonarola from Lombardy to Florence, but he was going then to Genoa, and not to Florence; besides, that biographer makes constant mistakes in his dates, so that we have considered it more exact to describe the vision in this place.

‡ Libri, in his *Histoire des Sciences Mathématiques*, gives a letter of Christopher Columbus, in which he describes a similar vision which he saw in America; being abandoned by all his companions, there came a voice from heaven encouraging him to continue his undertaking. Libri justly considers that letter one of the most eloquent in our literature.

The state of matters in Florence had become much worse, for Piero's insolence had become greater, and the ill-humour of the people was every day more manifest. The Prior of St. Mark thus found himself in a position of considerable difficulty; it was necessary for him either to remain silent, or to expose himself to the risk of being again sent away by some new order from his superiors in Lombardy or Rome. In considering this state of things, he remembered that the Tuscan Congregation had been separated from that of Lombardy up to the year 1448, when it was united to it on account of the plague, which caused the convents to be deserted; it did not therefore appear to him difficult to restore matters to their former state of independence, now that the monks in Tuscany had increased.* He set to work therefore with his wonted energy, to bring about a change on which the success of all his future plans must depend. In this business he, for the first time, gave proof of great practical energy, whereas the frivolous and unsteady nature of Piero showed itself more and more, for he was persuaded to favour a scheme, the sole object of which was to annihilate his own authority over the convent of St. Mark. He directed the magistrates to write several letters to the Florentine Ambassador at Rome, and to the Cardinal of Naples, warmly recommending it.† The conduct of Piero is the more inexplicable, inasmuch as at that very time he was inclined to show favour to the Minor Friars (Franciscans), who had always been enemies of the Dominicans, and were then urging in their sermons the

* Marchese, p. 83. Savonarola speaks of this frequently; the Council of Dieci, in the letters they wrote to Rome on this business, describes it. See the notes which follow.

† In the Archivio delle Riformagioni there are two letters of the Dieci, one to the Ambassador Filippo Valori, at Rome, the other to Cardinal Oliviero Caraffa, dated May 10, 1493, both warmly recommending the demand of the friars of St. Mark.

expulsion of the Jews, contrary to the express orders of the Signory (SIGNORIA), as it had given rise to many disturbances in Florence.* But whether it was that he did not understand the importance of the demand, or that he wished to displease Ludovico the Moor, the lord of Lombardy, certain it is that, in this thing, he showed favour to Savonarola; who, taking advantage of the moment, immediately sent to Rome the friars Alessandro Rinuccini and Frà Domenico da Pescia, the last of whom we shall hereafter have frequent occasion to mention. He was one of Savonarola's most sincere and ardent followers. Born at the foot of the mountains of Pistoia, he had all the ardour and boldness of those mountaineers; and, animated by perfect sincerity and faith, he was enthusiastically devoted to Savonarola; he believed him to be a prophet sent by God to Florence; and, for his sake, would have submitted, without a moment's hesitation, to be burned alive. The two friars arrived in Rome, but the favour they met with was not sufficient to defeat the Lombards, who, by means of Ludovico, had obtained the support of several ambassadors; the consequence of which was, that the dispute of a convent became a question of state.† They therefore wrote to Savonarola from Rome, that he must give up all hope of carrying his scheme; but he replied to them, 'Away with doubt—stand firm and you will be victorious; the Lord scatters the councils of the nations, and casts the designs of princes to the ground.‡

* A minute account of those disturbances is contained in Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. i. p. 23 and following. MS. in the Magliabechian library, palch. ii. 129.

† In favour of St. Mark's were the Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici; the Cardinal Oliviero Caraffa, Archbishop of Naples; Gioacchino Turriano, General of the Dominicans. For the Lombards were The Moor, the Genocese, the Duke of Ferrara, Bentivoglio of Bologna, and, it would appear also, the King of Naples.

‡ Burlamacchi, p. 47.

And, indeed, the victory was gained, but in a strange and unexpected manner. On the 22nd of May all hope of success seemed to be lost; the Pope, being unwilling to consent, dissolved the consistory, telling them that he did not wish to sign any brief that day. All had left except the Cardinal of Naples, with whom he entered into a pleasant and friendly conversation, giving way to that *abandon* so natural to him. The Cardinal thought that now was the time to make another trial, and dexterously pulling the brief from his pocket, which had been already drawn up, he begged the Pope to affix his seal to it. He declined with a smile, and the Cardinal smiling in turn, took the ring from the Pope's finger and sealed the brief.* This had scarcely been done, when, as if with a presentiment of what had occurred, messengers arrived in great haste from the Lombards, with new and stronger recommendations. But the Pope would not listen to another word on the business which had already annoyed him, saying, '*What is done, is done.*' Such was the way in which St. Mark's obtained its independence, and the words of Savonarola were verified.

The Lombards, thus so unexpectedly defeated, made all sorts of attempts to get the brief annulled, or, at all events, to abate its effect; and in this they were encouraged by Piero de' Medici, who, after having thwarted them, now came forward to help them.† But it was now too

* A copy of it is in the Riccardian library, cod. 2,053.

† Before the brief had been signed, they had obtained an order from Milan, commanding Savonarola immediately to leave Florence. Fortunately, however, it was directed to the Prior of the Dominican Convent at Fiesole, who was absent, so that it did not reach Savonarola until after his receipt of the brief. They then, with the aid of Piero, induced Savonarola to agree to a convention, that the Lombard Congregation should retain all its ancient authority in Tuscany, so far as it was not contrary to the brief that had been obtained. The convention was in itself a nullity, and for that reason Savonarola had agreed to it, by a letter of two or three lines to Piero, the only one he ever wrote to him. M. Perrens, in giving this letter, appears not to have been aware of the

late. St. Mark's having become the centre of a congregation was dependent solely on Rome. Savonarola was immediately elected prior, and in his new position he could speak openly and securely, and it was no longer in the power of anyone to remove him from Florence, which thus became his sole place of residence. From the first, he alone had been aware of the important effect the brief would produce; others perceived it at a later period. But new and more serious dangers were thickening around him, and he prepared himself to meet them.

Above everything it was necessary to reform the discipline of the convent. At one time he had thoughts of retiring with his brother monks to a solitary mountain, and there live as poor hermits;* but those youthful dreams had now given way to more mature ideas. He no longer considered it advisable to give up society, but rather to live in the midst of it, in order to correct its defects; not to make hermits, but good religious men, who should lead an exemplary life, and be ready to shed their blood for the salvation of souls. To correct evil habits, to rekindle faith, to reform the Church, were the objects which he desired to promote. And so soon as the Lord should fulfil those holy desires, he would depart from Italy; and, accompanied by the more courageous among his brother monks, would go to spread the religion of Christ in the East. Constantinople was one of the dreams of that time; politicians

reason why it was written; and quotes it as a proof of *souplesse*, and as demonstrating that '*le prieur sut fort bien, dans l'occasion, faire acte de soumission, sinon à Laurent, du moins, à son fils Pierre.*' (Vol. i. p. 51). But this letter, together with the convention, exists in the Archivio Mediceo, enclosed in another of Jacopo Salviati; and it is clearly seen from the three documents, that there is no question either of *souplesse* or *soumission*. See Burlamacchi, p. 46; Barsanti, Pico, &c.

* Burlamacchi, p. 46; it appears that Savonarola had so far carried out this scheme, that he had given directions for a wood on a mountain to be cut down, where he proposed to establish the hermitage.

desired to humble the enemy of Europe, and re-establish the Roman empire: the religious to deliver Jerusalem into the hands of believers; and very many of them believed with Savonarola, that the time announced in the prophecies was near at hand, when finally there would be only one sheepfold and one Shepherd.

But, to return to the convent, the first reform that Savonarola introduced was to enforce the practice of poverty. Saint Domenick had threatened with awful words, that his malediction would visit all who should dare to bring possessions into his religious fraternity; but since the death of St. Antonino, these words had only remained written on the walls of the cloisters.*

The Convent of St. Mark, in its reform, had adopted the power of holding property, and in a short time its wealth had greatly accumulated. Savonarola, therefore, restored the ancient constitution in full vigour; but as voluntary offerings had for a long time diminished, it was necessary to provide in some other way for the necessities of the convent. He lessened the expenses by clothing the friars with cheaper materials; by making their cells more simple and unadorned; by forbidding them to have illuminated books, crucifixes of gold and silver, and similar vanities. But not satisfied with this, he was desirous that his monks should live by the fruits of their own labours, and he therefore established schools in which they might learn painting, sculpture, architecture, and the art of copying and illuminating manuscripts. The lay brothers, and those

* 'Be charitable, preserve humility, practice poverty with cheerfulness: may my curse, and that of God, fall upon him who shall bring possessions into this order.' These were the last words of St. Domenick to his disciples. The Beato Angelico painted on the external wall of the dormitory, the Virgin and many Saints, and among them St. Domenick, holding an open book, in which those words of his were written. See Lacordaire, *Vita di San Domenico*; Padre Marchese, *Storia del Convento di San Marco*.

friars who were least fitted for the nobler works of the Spirit, were to be employed in those arts that would supply the wants of the convent. The priests and higher clergy (*prelati*) would thereby be left more free to attend, in the confessional, to the cure of souls, and to direct the education, intellectual and spiritual, of the novices. The more advanced in the spirit of charity and in theology were to devote themselves to preaching, to visiting different cities, accompanied by one only of the lay brothers, who was to labour unceasingly, in order that, by his gains, he might be able to provide, in part at least, for his companion. Savonarola afterwards gave special encouragement to three objects of study in the convent: namely, theology, morals, and above all, the Holy Scriptures; in order to understand which, Greek, Hebrew, and other Oriental languages were taught; and those languages he considered would also be of use when, as he hoped, he and his brethren would be sent by the Lord to spread the gospel among the Turks.*

It was not easy to set all these plans in operation, nor did any of them escape obstacles to their success; but the convent began rapidly to flourish: earnestness and zeal for study increased, as well as devotion for the sacred writings and the spirit of religion. The progress was made easy when it was seen that the Prior was a living model of the principles he inculcated. His garments were always of the most ordinary material; his bed was harder than any other, his cell the most poorly furnished; and if severe with others, he was still more so with himself. The consequence of all

* Burlamacchi; Padre Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*. Savonarola often alludes in his sermons to those languages which he introduced into the Convent, and to the use to which they might be applied. Rio in his *Art Chrétien*, speaks with some eloquence of the schools of the Fine Arts in St. Mark, exaggerating, however, the importance of them.

this was, that an enthusiasm for St. Mark's was produced among the people; many noble citizens asked to be admitted into the Order; and it has been said that Politian and Pico della Mirandola were much disposed to take this step; but the most important result of all was the sympathy that again arose in the other convents. The Dominican convents of Fiesole, Prato, and Bibbiena, the two hospices of the Maddalena, in the districts of the Mugnone and of Lecceto, asked to be admitted into the Tuscan Congregation, and were received.* The enthusiasm was such, that the friars of the monastery of Camaldoli had a contract drawn up by a notary, in which they bound themselves to change their order, so as to be united with that of St. Mark. Burlamacchi himself was the bearer of the request to Savonarola, who, however, declined to accede to it, because it was not a matter upon which he could decide, as not within the authority granted to him by the Pope's brief. He would not give his enemies any just ground for charges against him, however, much he might desire to see all the Dominicans of Tuscany collected around him; but this could not easily take place, amongst other reasons, on account of the political enmities by which the country was divided.†

We have shown how badly he was received a short time ago at Pisa; and of the forty-four friars then in the convent, only four would join that of St. Mark, the first of whom was that same Stefano Codiponte whom we have already particularly mentioned.‡ At Siena he met with a still worse reception, for he received

* Marchese, *Storia di San Marco*.

† In a letter to the Pope, which we shall hereafter have occasion to mention, Savonarola speaks of those enmities, and of the dangers to which they exposed him.

‡ See *Annali del Convento di Santa Caterina di Pisa*, published in the *Archivio Storico*.

an order from the magistracy to leave the city; * from which he indignantly returned to Florence, where the congregation of St. Mark was increasing and flourishing; and all who belonged to it were full of fervour and were encouraged by the sympathy of those around them.

NOTE

On the Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and on his last words to Savonarola.

Some historians, desirous to defend Lorenzo on all occasions, right or wrong, have thought proper to deny that Savonarola ever uttered to Lorenzo the words that we have reported. Among the different reasons they assign for this assertion, one only is deserving of consideration. Politian in his letter to Jacopo Antiquario (xv. Kalendas Junias 1492) minutely describes the last illness and death of Lorenzo, speaks of the visit of Savonarola, and takes no notice of the three conditions we have quoted. Therefore, the historians add, he was the only witness of the fact, he wrote privately to a friend, and he had no motive to alter it: he is thus entitled to more credit than the biographers of Savonarola, who, in order to exalt their hero, probably coloured the transaction highly, according to their usual custom.

In the first place, there is no ground for the assertion that Politian was present at the interview between Lorenzo and Savonarola, but the reverse; for Razzi says expressly, that all other persons left the room.† It

* These facts are derived from documents existing in the Archives of Siena.

† The room in the Villa Careggi in which Lorenzo died is still shown; it is a small apartment.—TR.

is certain that Politian says that he was often told to retire into the next room, and it is more than probable that this would be the case when Lorenzo was going to confess; and even if he remained, it is not likely that Lorenzo would make his confession in any other than a low voice. As to the private letter to a friend, that is a ground that can only have weight with those who are ignorant in what way the correspondence of the learned in the fifteenth century came out as part of their works, and how they often were collected by the writers themselves, and prepared for the press. Let us now consider who the persons were who narrate the facts as we have given them. Their number is infinite; we can assert that all the biographers of Savonarola, ancient or modern, in print or in manuscript, agree in this particular, with the exception of Perrens and Rastrelli, the latter of whom published an anonymous work (with the date of Geneva 1781), which may more properly be called a libel than a biography. Our narrative is supported by the following writers:—Burlamacchi, page 29; Pico, cap. vi.; Barsanti, lib. i., par. xxvi.-vii.; Razzi, cap. vi. MS. *Riccard.* and *Magliab.*; Cinozzi MS. as above, in *Riccard.* cod. 2053, and *Magliab.* xxxv. 205; Fra Marco della Casa, *Vita, &c.* MS. in the Convent of St. Mark in Florence; *Vita Fratris Hieronymi, Fratris Salvestri, et Fratris Dominici*, a valuable MS., that seems autograph, transferred from the library of the Noviciates of St. Mark to the *Magliab.* i. vii. 28. In the xxiii. chapter of that life the author says: ‘Omnia hæc quæ in hac Vita scripta sunt, aut ab autore visa aut a fide dignis audita,’ and in cap. xi. he narrates the fact in the same way as Burlamacchi and the rest. In the library of Gino Capponi, code cccxiii., there is a manuscript, which, although it be a paraphrase of Burlamacchi, may serve to confirm the fact; a similar one is in the Imperial library at Paris; and there is an infinite number

of them in public and private libraries, to which it would be useless to refer. It may be seen also what Rubieri says on this subject, in his very valuable critical remarks on Perrens, *Polimazia*, Num. 3 and 4. can. ii.

As we do not desire to discuss one by one all the authorities which support our opinion, we shall confine ourselves to those of Burlamacchi and Pico. (Burlamacchi, pp. 28, 29 ; Pico, cap. vi.) Bringing the subject within these limits, let us inquire whether we are to attach most credit to Politian, who was a courtier, constrained by his very position to be an habitual flatterer, or to Burlamacchi, an honest sincere man, and to Pico, not only honest and sincere, but a rich and independent prince, and a member of a family on friendly terms with the Medici : whether we ought to believe the silence of a courtier on a fact which he could not reveal without the risk of danger to his future fate, or the testimony of two honest men, contemporary and intimate with Savonarola, writing at a time most unfavourable to his memory, and asserting things of him which, if not true, must have been invented, and when there were many living whose interest it would have been to contradict them. They, on the other hand, narrate the fact as generally known, and say that they had had it confirmed by Silvestro Maruffi, who had it from Savonarola himself, and by Domenico Benivieni, who had it from some of the attendants on Lorenzo, to whom he himself mentioned it before he expired. (See also Cinozzi, who was personally acquainted with Savonarola, and is most minute and precise on the point.)

It appears to us that there is not the least room for any kind of doubt ; and, in fact, until the last century, no one ever thought of refusing belief to the story. Fabroni, in his *Vita Laurentii Medicis*, a most learned work, but most servile to the Medici, was the first who, relying upon the letter of Politian, impugned the fact.

Roscoe, who derives so many of his facts from Fabroni, and very frequently copies him, followed him in this matter; and lastly Perrens, who very frequently commits mistakes by trusting to Roscoe, has done so in this case.

But if we only read the letter of Politian, we shall see that so far from impugning the fact, he so evidently disfigures it, that his own words confirm that which he wished to conceal from us. ‘Abierat vixdum Picus, cum Ferrariensis Hieronymus, insignis et doctrinâ et sanctimoniâ vir, cœlestisque doctrinæ prædicator egregius, cubiculum ingreditur, hortatur ut fidem teneat; ille vero tenere se ait inconcussam: ut quam emendatissime posthac vivere destinet; scilicet facturum obnixè respondit: ut mortem denique, si necesse sit, æquo animo tolleret; nihil vero inquit ille, iucundius, si quidem ita Deo decretum sit. Recedebat homo iam, cum Laurentius: heus, inquit, benedictionem, pater, priusquam a nobis proficiscaris. Simul demisso capite vultuque, et in omnem piæ religionis imaginem formatus, subinde ad verba illius et preces rite ac memoriter responsitabat, ne tantillum quidem familiarium luctu, aperto iam neque se ulterius dissimulante, commotus. Diceresindictam cœteris, uno excepto Laurentio, mortem.’

Who, moreover, can believe that Savonarola would voluntarily have gone to the dying Lorenzo, and have said to him—First: Do you believe? Secondly: Are you prepared to lead a good life? Thirdly: Have you prepared yourself for death? and that when the Magnificent had answered all these questions in the affirmative, the friar would have retired without even giving him his blessing? It does not admit of a doubt that if Savonarola went to Lorenzo, he must have been sent for, because he was not a man to go uncalled, nor would the courtiers have granted him admission. And for what reason than a wish to confess to him would Lorenzo have asked to see

Savonarola at such a moment? And if he did confess, what sins was he most likely to think of than those that were known to the whole world as the gravest of his whole life, the sins mentioned by Pico and Burlamacchi? Finally, if the friar left without giving his blessing, it is an evident proof that the sins had not been pardoned. The whole question is thus restricted, not to the visit nor to the confession, nor to the absolution withheld, but to the three sentences of Savonarola alone. Now with regard to the first, Politian's narrative differs in no respect from that of the other authors; as to the second, the difference is of little moment; there remains only the third, namely *to restore liberty to the people of Florence*, and that is precisely the point upon which it was important for Politian to be silent; nothing, therefore, was more natural than that he should have altered it to '*prepare yourself for death.*'

CHAPTER X.

SAVONAROLA, IN ADVENT 1493, EXPOUNDS THE CHIEF
POINTS IN HIS DOCTRINE — IN LENT 1494, HE PREDICTS
THE ARRIVAL OF THE FRENCH ARMY.

[1493—1494.]

SAVONAROLA resumed his preaching in Florence in Advent 1493, with a feeling of greater confidence, with much more freedom of speech, and with an always increasing audience. The preacher, the friar of exemplary life, was now the head of the Tuscan Congregation; he whose predictions had been so marvelously verified; whose absolution The Magnificent had wished to receive. These considerations so increased the favour of the multitude, that he could indulge in greater boldness of language without any fear of the vengeance of Piero de' Medici. The immoral lives of the Italian princes and of the higher clergy, the corruption and ruinous state of the church, their approaching punishments, and the desire of all good men that some barrier should be raised against this general depravity, were the constant topics dwelt upon in the twenty-five sermons on the 73rd Psalm (*Quam bonus*), which he delivered in Advent of this year. In these he also entered at some length upon some of the most weighty points in Christian theology, for he wished to exhibit a complete picture of his own doctrine, tracing it in bold features, so as to impress

it upon the minds of his hearers, that they might prepare themselves to meet the scourges about to be inflicted. And, it may truly be said, that, as regards the theological parts, those sermons are among the best that Savonarola ever delivered.

We shall begin with his doctrine on faith, giving it in his own words:—‘Faith is a gift of God for the salvation of every believer; therefore, my children, do not err with those who say, if I were to see some miracle, some one rise from the dead, I would believe. Such persons deceive themselves, for faith is not a thing in our power, but is a supernatural gift, a light transmitted from above into the mind of man. And whosoever would receive this, must inwardly prepare himself, and humble himself before God.’* Here, it might be asked, ‘If every thing designed for a special end is capable of arriving at it by natural means, how is it that the nature of man does not suffice of itself to arrive at a knowledge of its destined end? The nature of man is perhaps inferior to that of the brute creation?’ No, he ought to attribute that to a nobler and higher excellence in himself; for his end is divine, an end that transcends natural things.† But why, thou mayest ask, why are some elected and others not? ‘The things of faith, my son, thou must search after by the light of faith, and in the way which the Scriptures have laid it before thee; further than this thou must not go, if thou dost not wish to stumble. Who art thou that repliest to God? Hath not the potter power over the clay to make

* Sermons on the psalm *Quam bonus*,¹ Prato 1846. See also in the same volume the Sermons on the First Epistle of St. John, sermon iv. p. 237. See also the Florentine edition of 1528, and that of Venice of 1544.

† Ibidem.

¹ The 73d Psalm, v. i.—‘Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.’—TR.

‘of the same mass one vessel of honour and another of dishonour?’* In the elect God shows his mercy, in the reprobate his justice. But if thou askest me, wherefore has God predestined this man and not that? Why is John predestined rather than Peter? My answer is, it is God’s will, and there is no other answer to be given. Origen would go beyond those limits, and said that predestination depended upon merits in another life anterior to the present. The Pelagians said that it depended on our merits in this life. According to those heretics the beginning of well-doing was from ourselves, its consummation and perfection from God. They would overstep the assigned limits, and they fell into heresy. The Scriptures are most clear; they tell us, not in one place, but in many, that not only the end of good works but their beginning comes from God; and thus, in all our good works, it is God who works in us. ‘It is therefore not true that through pre-existing works and merits God gives us grace, and that by them we are predestined to the life eternal; as if works and merits were the cause of predestination; as we have said already, the sole will of God is the cause.’†

‘Tell me, St. Peter, tell me, Mary Magdalene, why are ye in paradise? Ye have sinned like as we have done. Thou, Peter, who hadst been witness of the Son of God, hadst conversed with him, heard him preach, seen his miracles, and with two other disciples, beheld him transfigured on Mount Tabor, and heard his paternal voice; notwithstanding all this, thou afterwards deniedst Him to a low born woman, and thou wast again restored to favour and made the head of the Church, and art now in possession of celestial bliss; from whence hast thou derived all those blessings? Confess that thou dost owe thy salvation, not to thy own merits, but to the goodness

* Predica ix. pp. 20, 21.

† Predica viii. p. 299, and following.

of God. He it is who conferred the blessing upon thee—who gave thee in this life so much grace, so much light. And thou, Mary Magdalene, who wast commonly called the sinner, thou didst hear thy master, Christ Jesus, many times preach, but thou remainedst hardened, and although thy sister Martha corrected thee, and exhorted thee to lead a better life, thou heededst her not. But when it pleased the Lord, and He touched thy heart, thou wentest like one overjoyed to the house of the Pharisee with thy alabaster box, thou bathedst his feet with thy tears, and wast deemed worthy to hear the sweet words, “*Thy many sins are forgiven thee.*” And again, thou wast received with so much favour by the Saviour that thou wast permitted to be the first witness of his resurrection, and made an apostle of the Apostles. That grace, O Mary, those gifts, were not bestowed on thee by reason of thy deserts, but because God loved thee and favoured thee.’ *

By confining ourselves to quotations such as these, and to detached sentences from the rest of the discourse, we may be thought to have fallen into the same mistake as that of some Germans and Englishmen who have been willing to find in Savonarola a supporter of that part of the reformed creed which says that justification comes by faith alone, without good works, and that the believer is nothing more than a passive instrument in the hand of the Lord, who might either elect or abandon him, without the man, by free will, being able to contribute to his own salvation. But on questions of such high importance, Savonarola has expressed himself so clearly as to admit of no manner of doubt; and as soon as his works had been examined with due attention, these foreign writers were convicted, by authors belonging to their own country, of having fallen into error.†

* Sermon ix. p. 323.

† Rudelbach (see Savonarola, &c., cap. 3, of part iii. *Savonarola's*

The necessity of good works, free will, and the cooperation of man with grace, which is still held to be a gratuitous gift of God, are subjects to which Savonarola never fails to revert, insisting that we cannot of ourselves receive, but ought to make ourselves ready to receive, that gift of faith and grace, which will never fail to visit those who have done their utmost to deserve it.* There are three things, according to him, which are necessary to prepare and dispose us to receive them, namely, firmness in belief, prayer, and good works.† We therefore ought never to judge the sinner, but rather lament over his sins and have compassion on him; for so long as free will and the grace of God remain in him, he may turn again to the Lord and be converted.‡ And if any one ask, why the will is free, my answer is, because it is will.§ It is necessary, then, that man should concur in the act of justification, and should do all that lies in his power that God may not fail to be with him. Dost thou desire, my brother, to receive the love of Jesus Christ? See that thou listen to the divine voice which calls thee. The Lord calls upon thee daily, be thou also up and doing. ||

The motto which Savonarola adopted in his youth,

dogmatischer Standpunkt), is unquestionably the stoutest defender of the first of those opinions; but he has been opposed in them in Germany itself, by Meier; and yet even Meier tries to make out Savonarola to be a Protestant; wishing, however, to moderate, in part at least, the exaggeration of his countryman. Rudelbach (p. 359) supports his opinion by special reference to those Sermons on the Psalm *Quam bonus*; but Meier feels himself constrained to say: 'The conclusions which Rudelbach draws from those passages are opposed to Savonarola's statements, and rest solely, like so many things in the same work, on arbitrary interpretations of the original text' (Note 2 to p. 274.) From all this it will be seen, how ill advised Perrens was (after having held up Savonarola as a Catholic), to quote that chapter of Rudelbach as a true exposition of the friar's doctrine. The authority of Rudelbach, were it valid, would overturn all that Perrens has said in his biography.

* Sermon iv. pp. 237, 238.

† Sermon v. p. 246.

‡ Sermon xii. p. 373.

§ Sermon xiv, pp. 399, 400.

|| Sermon xvi, p. 443.

was this : ‘*Tanto sa ciascuno quanto opera;*’* *One really knows only that which he practises*; and we should be disposed to apply it to his doctrine, did we not rather call it a doctrine of love, using that word in the sense we have given it above, namely, that state in which the mind, inspired by grace, abounds in charity. ‘Such a love,’ he says, ‘is also a gift of God; but it is like a fire, which kindles every dry thing, and whosoever longs for it will find it enter into his heart and inflame it.’

‘Great and powerful is love, for love can do all things, ‘move all things, overcome all things—nothing is done ‘without the impulse of love—and as charity is the ‘greatest love, among all other loves, therefore it performs great and marvellous things.’ ‘It fulfils easily and pleasantly the whole of the Divine law, because it is the measure and the rule of all measures and all laws. Every individual law is the measure and rule of some one act, and not of another, but it is not so with charity, because in it we have the measure and rule of everything, and of all human works. Therefore, he who has this law of charity, directs himself and others rightly, and rightly interprets all laws. It would be well if this were observed by those who have the cure of souls, and who allow themselves to be guided by that which is written in the canon laws, which, being laws of a special nature, without that charity which is the measure and the universal law, never can be a right guide.’ ‘Take, ‘as an example, a physician who brings love and charity ‘to the sick, who, if he be of a good and loving nature, ‘learned and skilful, can be excelled by no one. Thou ‘wilt see that love will teach him everything, and will ‘be the measure and rule of all the measures and all the

* All the biographies give this motto, which he himself often repeats in his sermons. See, for example, the fifth Sermon on Job.

‘rules of medicine.’ ‘Love will endure endless fatigue without feeling wearied; will ask for all that is needed; will order the medicine and see it prepared, will never leave the sick bed. If, on the other hand, gain be the object, then the sick man will become a minor consideration and science itself will be of little avail.’ ‘See what love can effect. Take, for example, that of a mother for her child. Who has taught that young woman, who never before had children, thus to nurse the one she now possesses? Love. See the labour she will endure, night and day, to relieve it; and every labour, however great, becomes light. What causes this? Love. See her ways, her acts, her gestures, her soft words to her little boy. Who has taught her this? Love. Take the example of Christ, who, moved by exceeding charity, became as a little child, and made himself, in all things, like unto the sons of men, suffering hunger, thirst, cold, heat, and sorrows. What led him to do all this? Love. At one time he conversed with the just, at another with publicans, and he led such a life, that all men and all women, little and great, rich and poor, might imitate him, each according to his own manner, and according to his own station, and doubtless they were saved. What enabled them to endure so poor and miserable a life? Doubtless, charity. Charity bound Him to the pillar, charity led Him to the cross, charity raised Him from the dead, made Him ascend into Heaven, and thus work out all the mysteries of redemption.’ ‘This is the true, the only doctrine; but in those days, preachers tell us only of vain subtleties.’*

He then comes to speak of the clergy thus: They tickle the ears with Aristotle, Plato, Virgil, and Petrarch,

* Sermon ii. pp. 208, 210.

and take no concern in the salvation of souls. Why do they not, instead of books like these, teach that alone in which is the law and the spirit of life? The gospel, my Christian brethren, must be your constant companion. I speak not of the book, but of its spirit. If ye have not the spirit of grace, although you carry the whole volume about with you, it will be of no avail. And how much more foolish are those who go about loaded with briefs and tracts, and look as if they kept a stall at a fair. Charity does not consist of sheets of paper. The true books of Christ are the apostles and saints; the true reading of them is to imitate their lives. But now men have become the books of the devil.' 'They speak against pride and ambition, and 'are sunk in both, up to the very eyes; they preach 'chastity, and keep concubines; they command fasting, 'and delight to live sumptuously. Such books are pernicious, false, wicked, and of the devil; for his whole 'malice is written therein.* Such prelates exult in their 'dignity, and despise all others; they are those who 'desire to be looked up to with reverence and awe; they 'are those who seek to occupy the high places in the 'synagogue, the chief pulpits in Italy. They seek to be 'seen and saluted in the public places, and to be called 'master and rabbi. They delight in fringes and phylacteries,† they look wise, and expect to be understood by 'gestures.'‡

* Sermon viii. pp. 271, 274.

† Phylacteries are bands of parchment, on which are written passages of the Bible and of the commandment in the law, which the Hebrews wear round their arms.¹

‡ Sermon viii, p. 206.

¹ 'But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets; and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.—St. Matthew's Gospel, xxiii. 5, 6, 7.—TR.

From the prelates he passes on to describe the princes of Italy. ‘These wicked princes are sent as a punishment for the sins of their subjects; they are truly a great snare for souls; their palaces and halls are the refuge of all the beasts and monsters of the earth, and are a shelter for caitiffs and for every kind of wickedness. Such men resort to their courts because there they find the means and the excitements to give vent to all their evil passions. There we find the wicked councillors who devise new burdens and new imposts for sucking the blood of the people. There we find the flattering philosophers and poets, who, by a thousand stories and lies, trace the genealogy of those wicked princes from the Gods; and, what is still worse, there we find priests who adopt the same language. That, my brethren, is the city of Babylon, the city of the foolish and the impious, the city which the Lord will destroy.’*

He then goes on to describe the building of the city, which was erected by the twelve follies of the wicked. ‘They saw the light and the darkness, but they preferred the last to the first; there was an easy path and a rough and a dangerous path; they preferred the second to the first—and so forth. They went into the sea and leaped upon a whale, which they believed to be a rock, and settled upon it. What a generation of men is this? What will be the end of them, since they propose to build themselves a city thereon. What do ye? I say. Ye load the animal too heavily; ye will drown yourselves. But they continue their labour, they dispute, they build fortifications, they fight, and each one tries to subjugate another; and lastly comes a tyrant, who oppresses all. He pursues his enemies to the death, has spies everywhere, and excites new wars and new dissensions. The whale, at length, worn out by the tumult, moves, and all are drowned, and the city of

* Predica x, pp. 344, 345.

Babylon is destroyed.' 'Thus it is manifest—Savonarola concludes—that the wicked are lost in the labour of the foolish, and that the foolish will be punished.'*

It will be easily seen that by this city of the foolish Savonarola ventured to draw a picture of the Government of Piero de' Medici and his friends; which, according to his predictions, would not be long of being overthrown. But he did not stop here. After speaking of the corruption of the people and of the princes of Italy, he again discoursed, and with no less boldness, upon the much graver subject of the priesthood and the church. With a strange interpretation of some words in the Bible, he said, '*In securi et in asciâ deiecerunt eam.*' 'With axes and hatchets they destroyed it.† When the demon sees that man is weak he gives him a blow with a hatchet, to make him fall into sin, but when he sees him strong he strikes him down with the axe. If there be a young woman, honest and well-brought up, he sets an immoral youth near her, and with all kinds of flattery deceives her, and makes her fall into sin. Here the devil has dealt a blow with the axe. Here is an honourable citizen, he enters the courts of the great lords; there is the axe, and so well sharpened, that no strength of virtue can resist it. But we are in these days in a sadder plight: the demon has called his followers for the harvest, and has struck terrible blows upon the doors of the temple. The doors are those which lead into the house, and the prelates are those who should lead the faithful into the Church of Christ. It is because of this that the devil has dealt his great blows, and broken the doors to pieces. It is for this that good pastors are no longer to be found in

* Predica xiii. pp. 363, 364.

† 'But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.' Psalm lxxiv. 6.—TR.

the church.' 'Do ye not perceive that they are bringing everything to ruin? They have no judgement. They can make no distinction *between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between sweet and bitter*: things good appear to them evil, things true to them false, the sweet are to them bitter, and the bitter sweet. Ye see prelates prostrating themselves before earthly affections and earthly things; they no longer lay to heart the care of souls; it is enough for them if they receive their incomes; the sermons of their preachers are composed to please princes, and be magnified by them. But something worse yet remains: not only have they destroyed the Church of God, but have erected one according to a fashion of their own. This is the modern church, no longer built with living stones, that is, by Christians established in a living faith, and so formed of love. Go to Rome and through all Christendom, in the houses of the great prelates and the great lords nothing is thought of but poetry and the art of oratory. Go and see, and you will find them with books of the humanities in their hands, and giving themselves up to the belief that they know how to lead the souls of men aright by Virgil, Horace, and Cicero. Do ye wish to see the Church guided by the hand of the astrologer? Ye will not find either prelate or great lord who is not in confidential intercourse with some astrologer, who predicts to him the hour when he must ride or engage in some other affair. These same great lords do not dare to move a step contrary to what their astrologer tells them.'

'There are only two things in that temple in which they find delight, and these are the paintings, and the gilding with which it is covered. It is thus that in our church there are many beautiful external ceremonies in the solemnization of the holy offices, splendid vestments and draperies, with gold and silver candle-

‘sticks, and many chalices, all of which have a majestic
‘effect. There you see great prelates, wearing golden
‘mitres, set with precious stones, on their heads, and
‘with silver crosiers, standing before the altar with copes
‘of brocade, slowly intoning vespers and other masses
‘with much ceremony, accompanied by an organ and
‘singers, until ye become quite stupified; and these
‘men appear to ye to be men of great gravity and holi-
‘ness, and ye believe that they are incapable of error,
‘and they themselves believe that all they say and do is
‘commanded by the Gospel to be observed. Men feed
‘upon those vanities, and rejoice in those ceremonies,
‘and say that the Church of Christ was never in so
‘flourishing a state, and that divine worship was never
‘so well conducted as in this day; and that the first pre-
‘lates were mere *prelatuzzi* (contemptible prelates) in
‘comparison with those of modern times. They certainly
‘had not so many golden mitres, nor so many chalices;
‘and they parted with those they had to relieve the
‘necessities of the poor; our prelates get their chalices by
‘taking that from the poor which is their support. But
‘dost thou know what I would say? In the primitive
‘church there were wooden chalices and golden prelates;
‘but now the church has golden chalices and wooden pre-
‘lates. They have established amongst us the festivals of
‘the devil, they believe not in God, and make a mockery
‘of the mysteries of our religion. What doest thou, O
‘Lord? Why slumberest thou? Arise and take the
‘Church out of the hands of the devil, out of the hands
‘of tyrants, out of the hands of wicked prelates. Hast
‘thou forgotten thy Church? Dost thou not love her?
‘Hast thou no care or her?’ We are become, O Lord,
the opprobrium of the nations: Turks are masters of
Constantinople; we have lost Asia, we have lost
Greece, we are become tributaries of infidels. O Lord
God, thou hast dealt with us as an angry father, thou

hast banished us from before thee. Hasten the punishment and the scourge, that there may be a speedy return to thee.* *Effunde iras tuas in gentes* (pour out thy wrath upon the nations). Be not scandalised, my brethren, by these words; rather consider that when the good wish for punishment, it is because they wish to see evil driven away, and the blessed reign of Jesus Christ triumphant throughout the world. We have now no other hope left us, unless the sword of the Lord threatens the earth.†

In this way he continued to deal with the evil habits of the day, with religion, and the Church; condemning princes and priests; and he came to the conclusion that punishment was near at hand, and that the good ought to wish for it. Having expounded his whole doctrine, Savonarola throws down a gauntlet of defiance to all potentates on earth: to all princes, whether temporal or ecclesiastical, to the wealthy, to the dignitaries among the clergy and the governments; all became the object of his charges. ‘I am,’ he said, ‘like hail, which bruises everyone who has no shelter.’ Thus, although those sermons of 1493 are neither the most eloquent nor the most bold, they are those which most fully lay before us the doctrine of Savonarola in all its parts. We discover in them at once the acute expounder of dogmas, the fearless accuser of the corrupt condition of the Church, the avowed friend of liberty and of the people.

After reposing until Lent, in 1494, he resumed the expounding of Genesis, which he had already begun in 1490, and continued it almost without any interruption.‡ The sermons he preached on that occasion are called

* Sermon xvii. p. 543, and following.

† Sermon xxiii. We find the same thought repeated in many of the sermons, and forming the ground-work of all those preached this Advent.

‡ *Compendium Revelationum.*

Prediche sopra l'Arca di Noè (Sermons on Noah's Ark).

We find them noticed in all his biographies; all the authors speak of the great impression they made upon the people, how his hearers were carried away by the wonder they excited, and how marvellously what he foretold in them came to pass. But, unfortunately, we can only with difficulty form any judgement upon them; so incomplete and incorrect are all those parts of them that have been preserved, that almost every trace of Savonarola is lost. He who took them down when they were preached could not have written with sufficient rapidity to follow the orator; and so left his manuscript incorrect and full of blanks. A publisher at Venice, in order to give them *a more literary form*, had them translated, but in an almost barbarous Latin.* For these reasons, Quetif and others have doubted whether they really are Savonarola's. Though indisputably in a state of very great confusion, so much so as to make any continuous reading of them impossible, the sentences are much too clear, and the real substance of them too evidently Savonarola's, to lead us to agree in the doubts of Quetif.

After having, in the preceding Advent, demonstrated the necessity and the near approach of punishments, Savonarola this time constructs a mystical ark, in which all those who wish to escape from the coming deluge must take refuge. The ark, which in the literal sense is that constructed by Noah, as described in Genesis, is the gathering together of the good; its length is faith, its breadth charity, its depth hope. He continued the subject throughout the whole of Lent, according

* Venice 1536, ex officinâ divi Bernardini. To be aware of the many blanks which the manuscript of those sermons must have contained, it is advisable, in the first place, to read them all through, and then see what the editor says of them, and of the sermons on Job.

to this allegory, and after setting before them each day some new picture, he exhibited one to them, intended to show the virtues by which true Christians are distinguished. At last, in the morning of Easter-day, the ark was finished. 'Let everyone hasten,' he concluded 'let everyone hasten to enter into the ark of the Lord; Noah invites all, the door is open; but the time will come when the ark will be closed, and many will repent that they had not entered therein.' Throughout the whole of Lent, he dwelt at great length on the coming punishments, and announced the approach of a new Cyrus, who should traverse Italy as a conqueror, without meeting with any resistance, or breaking a single lance. Very many historians and biographers have recorded these predictions; and Frà Benedetto* refers to the words of his master in the following verses:—

Presto vedrai summerso ogni tiranno,
 E tutta Italia vedrai conquistata
 Con sua vergogna e vituperio e danno.
 Roma, tu sarai presto captivata;
 Vedo venir in te coltel dell' ira,
 E tempo è breve e vola ogni giornata.

* * * *

Vuol renovar la Chiesa el mio Signore,
 E convertir ogni barbara gente,
 E sarà un ovile et un pastore.
 Ma prima Italia tutta fia dolente,
 E tanto sangue in essa s'ha a versare,
 Che rara fia per tutto la sua gente.†

* Frà Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*, a small poem published by Marchese in the *Archivio Storico*, c. ii.: 'Epitome of the prophecies which the compiler heard Jerome deliver in his sermons while expounding the verses on Noah's Ark, at a time when there was no suspicion of any tribulations.'

† Soon thou shalt see every tyrant fall,
 And thou shalt see all Italy vanquished,
 To her shame, disgrace and ruin.
 Rome, thou wilt soon be captured,

Those sermons, which we have been obliged to confess we have been unable to obtain, awoke so extraordinary and so universal a degree of interest, that the Duomo was more and more crowded every day, and Savonarola became the most important personage then in Florence. We are surprised that he should have been so long in constructing his ark, and that to expound the short chapter in Genesis that relates to it occupied him the whole of Lent. He admits that it was a matter of surprise to himself how he should have got on so slowly, and that it appeared as if a higher power had obliged him to postpone his sermons. Towards the month of September, having resumed preaching, and having delivered thirteen sermons on the same line of argument, he hastened to bring them to a conclusion.* In fact, the third of those sermons was devoted to the expounding of the 17th verse, which relates to the deluge, and was delivered on the

I see the avenging sword pierce thee;
The time is brief, each day flies quickly past.

* * * *

The Lord our God will renovate the Church,
And will convert every barbarian race,
There will be one sheepfold and one shepherd:
But ere this happen, Italy will have to mourn,
And so much of her blood will be poured out,
That thinned will be the ranks of all her people.

* The Venetian editor has given the title of Advent to these thirteen sermons, and they are placed before the forty-three preached in Lent, printed with the same mistake. But in the works of Savonarola, printed in Venice, errors of that kind are very common. The Sermons on the Psalm *Quam bonus* were preached in Lent 1493, and those in Advent, were on Haggai. The thirteen on Noah's Ark ought, therefore, to follow those in Lent, 1494, and not precede them, as may be clearly seen on reading those. The third of them, in fact, expounds the words *Ecce ego adducam aquas* (Lo I will bring the waters), and Savonarola himself says, in the *Compendio di Rivelazioni*, that it was delivered on the 21st of September, therefore, after Lent. He was in the habit of preaching between Lent and the following Advent, and called his discourses *Sermons in the Festivals*, and the thirteen on Noah's Ark were of this kind. M. Perrens has allowed himself to be misled by the editor, as he would have seen had he read those sermons.

21st of September, a memorable day both for Savonarola and his hearers. The Duomo could scarcely contain the crowd, who, in a state of new and extraordinary excitement, waited with open ears for the voice of the preacher. At length he mounted the pulpit; the attention and silence of the audience were much greater even than usual. After having surveyed the assembled multitude, and seen the extraordinary trepidation that prevailed, he cried with a terrible voice, ‘And behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth.’ His voice sounded like a clap of thunder in the temple: his words seemed to strike an unusual terror into the mind of everyone.* Pico della Mirandola relates, that a cold shiver ran through all his bones, and that the hairs of his head stood on end; and Savonarola assures us that he was himself not less moved than his hearers.

Whence so violent an agitation? On that very day the news had arrived that an inundation of foreign troops was sweeping over the Alps to conquer Italy. And report, magnifying the truth, described their numbers as infinite, their stature gigantic, their character ferocious, and their arms invincible. The news came quite unexpectedly; not one Prince of Italy was prepared to meet it; there were no longer national armies; foreign armies were hostile; and terror took possession of men to such an extent that they fancied they saw rivers of blood. The multitude ran to Savonarola, as if to implore his help. All his words had come true; the princes whose

* ‘He had preached in Santa Reparata,¹ and having before the arrival of the king of France, just closed the Ark, these sermons caused such terror, alarm, sobbing and tears, that everyone passed through the streets without speaking, more dead than alive.’—*Cerretani Storia*, an autograph MS. in the Magliabechian library.

¹ An old name for the Duomo, it having been built on the site of an old church so called.—Tr.

deaths he had foretold were in their graves; the sword of the Lord had descended upon the earth; the scourge had begun. He alone had predicted these evils, and had seen them approaching; he alone knew the remedy for such a misfortune. His name, therefore, spread all over Italy; all eyes were turned towards him, who thus, by force of circumstances, found himself in the position of a statesman. Not only the people, but among them the most able of the citizens, flocked to him; his party, as if by magic, had become the rulers of the city. In truth, the state of Florence and of all Italy had undergone a change, and we must go somewhat back in our narrative to describe it, which we shall accordingly do at some length in the following book.

BOOK SECOND.

[1494–1495.]



CHAPTER I.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FRENCH IN ITALY.

[1494.]

AFTER the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, and the election of the new pope, the affairs of Italy rapidly sunk into a worse condition. Borgia, inflamed by an ambition to create new states for his sons, turned his eye, eager for prey, wherever he saw a weak and timid prize; he made and unmade treaties, friendships, and vows of fidelity; he would have exposed Italy and the whole of Europe to any extremity, that he might accomplish his purposes.* Nor was less danger to be apprehended from Ludovico the Moor, who was governed at one and the same time by fear and by ambition. His name, throughout Italy, was synonymous with duplicity and bad faith; his treaties and his oaths were violated at the first opportunity, or, rather, at the very time he was pledging his word he was studying how to break it on the next favourable occasion. He prided himself on being the most astute man in Italy, and he

* Machiavelli, *Legazioni*; Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*; Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*; Michelet, *Renaissance*; Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*; Cerretani, idem; the two last are MS. in the Magliabechian library.

never ceased plotting new schemes and contrivances to strengthen his own states, to get rid of his enemies, and increase his power. When under the influence of fear, the whole faculties of his mind appeared to become sharpened and to assume a state of convulsive activity, so that no human being could possibly predict what line of conduct he would have recourse to.* Most unfortunately for himself, and for Italy, fear took possession of him at the time we are now about to treat of, and kept him in a constant state of irresolution.

He had usurped the government of Milan, in the most cruel manner, from his nephew, Giovanni Galeazzo, whom he kept a prisoner in Pavia, not without the suspicion of having administered to him a slow poison. That young prince was then weak and sickly, and his strength was gradually wasting. He was therefore incapable of offering any resistance to The Moor, but his wife Isabella of Aragon, a daughter of Alphonso of Naples, could not endure the violent usurpation of their rights, the humiliating and miserable condition to which they had been condemned. She filled all Italy with her complaints, and was continually imploring her father and grandfather to avenge the insult to themselves, and to restore her and her husband to their states. Ferdinand of Aragon, and his son Alphonso, sovereigns of vast kingdoms, proud of the military renown they had acquired in the wars with the barons, and by the siege of Otranto, treated The Moor with a contempt so insolent, that in their despatches they called him Duke of Bari, and even Messer Ludovico;† constantly

* 'Le diet seigneur Ludovic, estoit homme très sage, mais fort craintif, et bien souple quand il avoit peur (j'en parle come de celuy que j'ay congnu et beaucoup de choses traicté avec luy), et homme sans foy, s'il voyoit son profit pour la rompre.'—Philippe de Comines, *Mémoires*, &c., lib. vii, c. ii. See also the authors quoted above.

† Some of those despatches, most of them written by Pontano, are of the greatest importance, and are in the Archives of Naples.

threatening to deprive him of the government he had usurped, and to restore Isabella. It is impossible to describe the state of trepidation into which The Moor was thrown, nor the plans he was devising; if he could have set fire to Italy and the whole world, to rid him of his alarm, he would not have had a moment's hesitation.*

Lorenzo de' Medici had shown the greatest prudence in the position he took between the two parties, holding himself neutral, keeping friends with both, by a kind of political equilibrium which then procured for him the name of the needle of the balance of Italy. By a treaty concluded in 1440, he had united the courts of Naples, Milan, and Florence, since when, by leaning sometimes to one side, and sometimes to another, he had contrived to prevent the dissolution of the alliance. But after his death, affairs assumed a new aspect, and the first thought of Ludovico was to test, in some way, the disposition of his new allies. He therefore proposed that on the occasion of the election of Borgia, ambassadors from the three courts should go to Rome, and should be presented together to the Pope. But Piero de' Medici, having already made splendid preparations for heading a solemn embassy from Florence, induced the King of Naples to find some pretext for declining the proposal of The Moor. The King seized the opportunity to wound his personal enemy at the same time, by letting him see that he declined in compliance with a wish expressed by Piero de' Medici. It is easy to conceive the degree of suspicion this created in the mind of Ludovico. He could not fail to perceive that there were signs of a deeply rooted enmity, and that he must consider himself as an isolated power in Italy; for the Orsini, who had received the command of an army

* See the authors quoted above.

from the King of Naples, had succeeded in drawing over Pietro de' Medici to their side.* These things led Ludovico to deliberate seriously upon his position, and he came at last to the determination to invite the King of France to undertake the conquest of the kingdom of Naples. Thus began that long series of calamities which, for so many ages, desolated Italy, which destroyed its prosperity in commerce, in the cultivation of literature and science, and extinguished every spark of liberty. The Moor was unquestionably the guilty cause of the first beginning of those misfortunes; but his name has been loaded with a degree of odium which facts do not bear out, when he is said to have been the author of deeds which had been in a long course of preparation; thus giving him an historical importance he does not deserve, even in the mischief he did.

The over-activity and the restless life of the preceding period had so exhausted Italy, that in the fifteenth century it had arrived at a premature old age, divided and weak; while, all around her, great and powerful states had multiplied, strong in youth and life. The Turk was in the full vigour of power, had advanced into Western Europe, and threatened, by land and by sea, all Italy and the whole continent of the West. Spain had united Castile and Aragon, had expelled the Moors, and, guided by the genius and boldness of Columbus, had already traversed the Atlantic. In France, Louis XI. with his iron despotism, had crushed the aristocracy and elevated the people, had established order in the finances, and unity in the nation, extending its confines on the Rhine and Pyrenees, while the extinction of the House of Anjou had given to the crown of France the dukedom of Anjou, Provence, and all the rights which

* See the authors quoted above.

the Angevines boasted to have upon the kingdom of Naples. Germany, although apparently debilitated by the weak and uncertain government of Maximilian, showed that her national strength was more than ever alive; and, lastly, the Swiss, who had the best infantry in Europe, held themselves in readiness to descend the Alps with a formidable army, on the side of any nation that would take them into their pay.

A consciousness of their own strength, a desire for adventure, the wants of civilisation, and, more than any other passion, national jealousy, directed all those nations towards Italy. They could not forgive her for being still the mistress of the world; that the young men from all parts of Europe still flocked to her universities; that she was the only seat of arts and literature; that at every court her manners were imitated and her language spoken; that the writers, artists, philosophers, physicians, astrologers, and navigators of Italy still eclipsed all others in glory, as her nobles and her merchants did in wealth. Admiration was united with a hatred, which stimulated all the other nations of Europe to invade her. It had become inevitable that Italy would scatter the seeds of her civilisation over the world; and that being now unable to conquer, it followed she must be conquered. This had become the crusade of the fifteenth century. Soldiers and statesmen looked to it as a precious and easy conquest, the learned as to a revelation of a world of science and art to the rest of Europe; the troops dreamt of the booty to be found in the treasures collected in the palaces and villas of Italy; and all dreamt of the beautiful sky and fruitful land.*

Among all the nations which seemed then destined

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital.* and *Histoire des Français*. Michelet, in his *Renaissance*, has treated this subject with much eloquence and originality.

to cross the Alps, France was foremost. Its position, in the centre of Europe, and on the confines of Italy, the genius of the people, its political and military condition, all combined to make it take the lead in the great movement, which, while it brought death upon Italy, gave life to Europe. To this is to be added, that the throne had just been ascended by Charles VIII., who was in the twenty-second year of his age, and had an extraordinary passion for adventure. Weak in constitution, small in stature, and almost deformed, scarcely knowing the letters of the alphabet, without either judgement or prudence, he was eager to command, and at the same time incapable of maintaining his royal supremacy among those who surrounded him.* He had always men of low birth about him, who, obtaining his favour, were advanced to the highest dignities in the state, and such men continually excited his puerile ambition to imitate St. Louis of France, and to render his name immortal by a crusade against the Turks, towards which the conquest of Naples must be the first step. While these men were trying to induce him to take advantage of the rights which the crown of France had acquired from the House of Anjou,† the Neapolitan exiles were always at his side, to awaken the same ambition in him. The Princes of Salerno

* The character of Charles VIII. is admirably described by Guicciardini in his *Storia d' Italia*. See also Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*. Parenti, in the MS. above quoted; Cerretani, *Storia di Firenze*, MS. *idem*; Sismondi, Michelet, &c. But of all other authors one should read for this period of history *Les Mémoires de Philippe de Comines*, who was one of the best observers and diplomatists of the fifteenth century. It may be well to refer to the *Histoire de Charles VIII. depuis l'an 1483 jusqu'à 1498*, par Guill. de Jaligny, A. de la Vigne, &c., Paris, 1618.

† Gibbon at one time contemplated writing the history of the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII. 'An event,' he says, 'which changed the face of Europe.' See the third volume of his *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1814), for his idea of this undertaking, and where he has shown the unfounded nature of the rights to which the crown of France laid claim.

and Bisignano, who had made their escape from the massacre of the barons, never ceased speaking of the cruel despotism of Ferdinand and Alphonso; representing the Angevine party to be the most powerful in the kingdom, and assuring him that he would be received with open arms by the whole people. And, indeed, the unhappy state of the Neapolitans was known to all; for although the statements of the exiles may have been exaggerated, there was an universal desire for some change.

As regards the rest of Italy, the arrival of the French was far more wished for than dreaded by all lovers of liberty. The facile and pliant disposition of that people, their unsteadiness and want of foresight, made every one expect that whatever he wished would surely come to pass; consequently, whenever the people were oppressed, whenever there was a tyrannical republic, their arrival was looked to as a relief from all sufferings. Already Louis XI. had been several times solicited by different parties to enter Italy, and when Ludovico the Moor sent his ambassadors to test the disposition of Charles VIII., there was no appearance of opposition to his design from any of the governments. Whether it was that Alexander wished to terrify the King of Naples, or that he was entangled by the subtle arts and astute politics of The Moor, certain it is that he gave encouragement to the coming of the French.*

It strikes us as a singular fact, that this foreign invasion, the source of so many calamities, should have then been encouraged by almost all Italy, and opposed by the French. The Barons of France, assembled in Council, openly declared themselves against an enterprise, which they represented as inconsiderate and dan-

* Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*; Despatches of King Ferdinand, in the Archives of Naples.

gerous. They declared that no reliance was to be placed on receiving assistance from such an ally as Ludovico, nor from a Pope so versatile and unsteady as Borgia; that the armies of the King of Naples were by no means to be despised; that France was exhausted in her finances, and had no means of supporting a long campaign. Their chief ground of opposition, however, was this, that they had no reliance on their own King, whom they held to be incapable of conducting an enterprise of so vast a nature. He paid no regard to their advice, but allowed himself to be entirely guided by two men who were wholly ignorant of war and of the affairs of state. One of them was Etienne de Vers, originally a valet, now Mareschal Beaucaire; the other, Guillaume Brissonet, who from being a simple tradesman had mounted to the high station of a French General and a Minister of Finance. These two men, allured by the hope of new gains, and by promises held out to them by The Moor and the Pope, were the only advisers of the war, and persuaded the King to engage in it.

He at length dismissed the agents of the King of Naples from his court, and dispatched four French emissaries to find out what were the intentions of the different Italian States. They found no sympathy on the part of the governments; the Republic of Venice declared itself neutral; Piero de' Medici was a devoted friend of the House of Anjou; even the Pope, after having invited the French, turned round, and joined the King of Naples. Ferdinand had not been able to accomplish this alliance when his fate began to be in danger, notwithstanding the many promises he made to Borgia; he died on the 25th of January, 1494, tortured by the most cruel remorse, and in his last hours of agony oppressed by the grief of leaving his family on the brink of losing the kingdom. After a long and pros-

perous life, he finished his career, according to the expression of a contemporary writer, *sine lux, sine crux*.* But his son Alphonso prepared vigorously for war, and while collecting his army and getting his fleet in order, he succeeded in gaining over the Pope by a sum of thirty thousand ducats, and by extensive assignments to the Pope's sons.

But if the French emissaries found that all the governments, with the exception of that of Ludovico, had become averse to the coming of the King, they saw clearly that the people continued favourable to it. In Florence, especially, where Savonarola openly from the pulpit invited the *new Cyrus* to cross the mountains, public opinion showed itself, without any reserve, to be most favourable to the French, and opposed to Piero de' Medici. He had found it necessary to oblige his own cousins, who had joined the popular party, to confine themselves to their villas, and had sent ambassadors to the King of France to defend and excuse the line of politics he had chosen; but instead of acting on their instructions, they showed themselves to be wholly opposed to the Medicean Government. One of them was Piero Capponi, who being always a man of a very resolute character, recommended the King to send the Florentine merchants out of his country, that by this blow to the material interests of the Republic, he might make the whole people rise against the Medici.†

* Burchardi, *Diarium*, &c.

† *Memoires de Messire Philippe de Comines, seigneur d'Argenton, sur les principaux faits et gestes de Louis XI, et Charles VIII, son fils, roys de France*, Paris, 1580. In cap. v. of book vii. he speaks of two embassies, sent by Piero de' Medici to Charles VIII., in the first of which were the Bishop of Arezzo and Piero Soderini. 'A la seconde fois envoya le dict Pierre (de' Medici) à Lyon, un appelé Pierre Capon, et autres; et disoit pour excuse (come ja avoit fait), que le roy Louis onzieme leur avoit commandé à Florence se mettre en ligue avec le roy Ferrand. . . . En toutes les deux ambassades y avoit tousjour quelcun ennemi du dict de Medicis, et pour especial ceste fois le dict Pierre (Capponi), et faisait sa charge plus aigre qu'elle n'estoit, et aussi conseilloit qu'on

All these encouragements should have made Charles anxious to set out; but hesitation seemed to be the natural bent of his mind. No sooner was everything ready, and the time for action arrived, than his doubts began. No sooner had it been ascertained that the people of Italy were in his favour, than he began to see the difficulties of his undertaking. But while the King was at Lyons, the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincola arrived there; he had escaped from the fortress of Ostia, whence he had at one time threatened the Pope, and where afterwards he was himself besieged, and reduced to such difficulties and dangers that he could only escape from them by flight. This was the man who became Pope Julius II., and who had been one of the few Cardinals who would not sell their votes to Borgia, of whom he was ever after a mortal enemy, calling him heretic and infidel. He never ceased to stir up war against him, and was desirous that a Council should be called to depose him; he neither dreaded the effects of labour, age, nor any dangers. The King saw him, and what he said made such an impression, that his hesitation was all at once removed, and he determined to prepare instantly to set out.*

The first thing was to provide funds, which, at that time, were very low in France, although Ludovico had already sent 200,000 ducats, and now promised to send more.† He had recourse, therefore, to bankers

‘bannist tout Florentin du royaume. Cecy je dis pour mieux vous faire entendre ce qui advint après; car le roy demoura en grande inimitié contre le dict Pierre; et les dicts general et seneschal (Beucaire e Brissonet) avoyent grand intelligence avec ses ennemis en la diette cité, et parespecial ce Capon, et avec deux cousins germains du dict Pierre, et de son nom propre.’ From this it is most evident that Capponi and all the liberal party were favourable to the French. For the same reasons, and with the same objects, Savonarola was also on their side.

* Guicciardini *Storia d'Italia*.

† Phil. de Comines, *Memoires*, &c. ‘Ego quantum potero præstabo

in Genoa, paying a very high rate of interest, at the same time pledging the crown jewels, as well as those of several nobles in his Court. Besides, it was necessary to come to an understanding with Spain and the Emperor, that he might not leave two enemies in his rear. With the first he made a treaty of alliance, ceding Perpignan and the county of Roussillon, which are the keys of the Pyrenees, and which Louis XI. had conquered with much labour and with much glory. The county of Artois, another conquest of the same monarch, was given up to the Emperor, to whom also his daughter was sent back, who had long before been divorced by Charles, without his ever giving her up, notwithstanding the repeated solicitations of her father. These concessions naturally displeased the French, who saw their national honour seriously compromised by the surrender of such important provinces, by treaties offensive to the dignity of the country, and by new debts which they could not well bear. All, therefore, augured badly of an enterprise which met with the disapprobation of all military men and statesmen, and in which the first step was an act of humiliation in the face of neighbouring nations. Nevertheless, Providence appeared to be on the side of France, and fortune could not be otherwise than favourable, for Italy had no power to resist.

Our armies were in the lowest state, little short of annihilation, and the reputation still enjoyed by those of the King of Naples, from having vanquished the scattered masses of the Barons, was not likely to be sustained in the open field. Our celebrated condottieri and soldiers of fortune, who, at one time, had faced foreign armies with so much honour, and had been the first to establish the science of war, and had been the instructors of all Europe in modern tactics, no longer existed. Their

armis, pecuniâ, equis; viris iuvabo, &c.' The Moor thus wrote to Charles, in a letter given by Corio in his *Storia di Milano*.

successors had not inherited any of their great qualities: they carried on a dishonourable trade in war, in which their chief concern was to increase their pay, and spare their lives. This was the time when, according to Machiavelli, two armies often fought several hours without anyone perishing by the sword; those only losing their lives who, falling down, were trampled to death by the cavalry.* The strength of the Italian armies at that time was almost entirely in cavalry; and the horseman and his steed were so heavily armed, that if once they fell it was impossible for them to rise without assistance. The infantry, on the contrary, were too lightly armed, and the arquebuse and pike were only partially introduced; they fought in detached bodies, behind ditches and embankments; and when collected together, they presented a wide front and a narrow flank, so that they were easily routed. The artillery consisted of heavy guns, few in number, drawn by bullocks, difficult to load, and with large balls, for the most part, of stone, so that they did very little execution.†

The French army, on the contrary, was the model of all that had yet been seen in Europe. Improved by all the newest inventions, its strength lay chiefly in the infantry, who advanced in large compact squadrons; and who, by having been drilled in a vast number of new manœuvres, easily took up positions in all manner of ways, and with incredible velocity. They had eight thousand Swiss for their advanced guard, and in their cavalry were to be found the most distinguished nobility of France, and the most gallant

* We need not take the literal sense of what Machiavelli says, who often repeats the same thing, and undoubtedly exaggerates the case; but the times must have been very bad when such stories could be told.

† Porzio, *Congiura dei Baroni*, li. § 2, minutely and with great skill, describes the Italian armies of that time. See also, Guicciardini, Sismondi, &c.

youths of Scotland; so that their strength was increased by a spirit of rivalry. The French had also the best arms then made; their infantry shone with polished halberts and pikes; and in every thousand foot soldiers there were a hundred muskets. Besides culverins and falconets, they had thirty-six cannons, on carriages drawn by horses, the carriage having four wheels, two of which could be detached when a battery was to be formed, and the guns kept close to the infantry; all which was then regarded as something wonderful.* To give anything like an exact account of the numbers of this army is almost impossible, because the old writers are far from being correct in such matters, and their custom of counting by men-at-arms,† only adds to the confusion. However, most of them agree in estimating that Charles had 22,000 infantry and 24,000 cavalry; and including all the people who followed the army, and the forces of The Moor, which were to join them on their arrival in Italy, the whole might amount to 60,000 men.‡

King Alphonso prepared himself for war with all the activity and all the forces he could command. His brother, Don Frederick, proceeded with a squadron to attack Genoa, where the French fleet was collected; Don Ferdinando, Duke of Calabria, supported by the Count Pitigliano, and Gian Jacopo Trivulzi, two officers of the highest reputation of that time, advanced into Romagna, to divert the war from the confines of the kingdom.

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Rép. Ital.*; and *Histoire des Français*; Michelet, *Renaissance*; Guicciardini, &c.

† A man at arms consisted of a dragoon, two cross-bow men, two spare horses in case of need, in all, five horses and three men. But these numbers often varied, and there are also great differences in the number of servants, pages, and other followers of an army.

‡ The discrepancies among old historians on this matter are so great that we do not quote them; they always reckoned by the eye and by hearsay. We have followed the computation of Nardi, which has been adopted by Sismondi and Michelet.

In this state of things, it was most urgent that Charles should hasten on his movements, and the same generals who had opposed the enterprise now pressed it on, persuaded that delay could only make his situation worse. But just then, the King's doubts returned, and he began to lose himself in all sorts of uncertainties; he seemed to have almost changed his mind, so much so that a part of his army, which had already set out, received orders to return. Seeing this, the Cardinal de San Piero in Vincola presented himself, and used language to the King almost violent, charging him with exposing to hazard not only his own honour but that of the whole nation; so powerful was the impression he made, that every source of uncertainty was removed. At last, on August 22, 1494, the King and his army set forth. They crossed Monte Ginevra, and arrived at Asti, where they were met by Ludovico, with his wife, and the Duke of Ferrara.

Amid feasting and ladies Charles again forgot the war, and so abandoned himself to pleasures that he became seriously ill, and was obliged to remain an entire month at Asti. From thence he went to Pavia, where he visited the unhappy Giovan Galeazzo, whose life, in the flower of youth, was fast drawing to a close. He listened to the lamentations of the wife, who, throwing herself at his feet, besought him, with bitter tears, to consider their unhappy fate. The King appears to have been much moved, and promised some effective assistance; but he had scarcely reached Piacenza from Pavia, when he heard of the death of the young prince: ascribed according to report, to poison which Ludovico had caused to be given to him. The whole army heard of the deed with indignation, for it showed them the nature of the ally they had to do with; the King alone appearing to take no heed of it. He had again fallen into a state of indecision, not being able to determine whether to pro-

ceed through Romagna or through Tuscany ; and in this state he again made a halt, and again gave himself up to pleasures.

In the meanwhile, accounts arrived from all quarters of the successes of the French. The able general, D'Aubigny, who had been sent into Romagna to keep the Neapolitan army in check, had succeeded with a moderate force, and without coming to any action, so to harass them that they fell back within their own boundary. At Genoa, the Duke of Orleans, by having a much larger fleet, had obliged Don Frederick to retreat. He afterwards disembarked at Rapallo, where there was a small Neapolitan garrison, having with him a body of Swiss troops, who, under the shelter of the ships' guns, were able to effect a landing. They sacked and set fire to the town, and put to the sword not only the garrison who had surrendered, but all the inhabitants, not excepting forty sick persons, whom they murdered in their beds. The news of such a deed spread an indescribable terror all over Italy, where so ferocious a mode of carrying on war was seldom resorted to, if not wholly unknown. The inhabitants of every city, of every town, imagined that they might have to share the fate of the unhappy Rapallo ; the very name of the French army struck terror, and their onward march became more and more free of opponents.

About this same time, Giovanni and Lorenzo de' Medici, cousins of Piero, who had joined the popular party, arrived at the French camp, having escaped from the villas to which they had been restricted by Piero. They came to assure the King that he would meet with no opposition in Tuscany to the passage of his army. It passed through the territory of Lunigiana, and advanced along the Magra. Arrived at the castle of Fivizzano, the French took it by assault, and there rivalled the Swiss in cruelty. They soon, however,

discovered that they had got into a position full of dangers. They were in a barren country, shut in on their left by mountains, on their right by the sea, which was still held by the enemy, and in their front they had the fastnesses of Sarzanello, Sarzana and Pietra Santa, which, with a small force, could obstruct the passage of any army, however formidable. If Piero de' Medici had had the courage to resort to any strong measure, he might, even at this latest hour, have driven back the French with immense loss and disgrace. But it, indeed, seemed as if Providence miraculously led on that army to our ruin, and that in spite of the stupid indolence and neglect of the King, everything with them was to prosper.

In Florence, the greatest confusion prevailed. The popular party had all along been favourable to the French, but the mad policy of Piero had allowed the King to advance as an enemy, sacking and burning everything on their line of march. What could be done in such a state of things? To lay open a free passage, without first treating as to terms, seemed imprudent and pusillanimous; to refuse it amounted to a declaration of war. The government of the city was in the hands of Piero, the sole author of all the disorder: everyone was considering what course it would be best to take, and, in the common danger, everyone thought of his own alarm and his own embarrassment. The situation of Piero was worse than all; a victorious enemy, enraged against him personally, was near at hand; without money, and knowing no one who would give him any; he had the country opposed to him, and had no adviser on whom he could rely. He sent Paoli Orsini with some horse and 300 infantry to reinforce the garrison of Sarzana; but soon after, his alarm increasing, he determined to go to the King's camp and sue for peace. In this he thought to imitate the journey of his father to Naples, when he so courageously placed

himself in the power of the King, in order to obtain honourable terms. But imitations seldom succeed; Piero was doing that through fear which Lorenzo did from courage, and while the result to him was humiliation: to his father it had been an increase of power and honour.*

He proceeded therefore to Pietra Santa, accompanied by ambassadors of the republic, and there he learned that Orsini having encountered a body of French, had been entirely defeated. This increased still more his desire to obtain peace at any price; and having sent for and obtained a safe conduct, he presented himself in the camp. He there learned that the King, with the advanced guard, had for three days been occupied with an attack upon the fortress of Sarzanello, without success. Any other man would have known how to take advantage of his position and of the serious danger in which the enemy's army was placed; but he could not shake off his terror, which was increased by the cold and harsh reception he met with from the King. Without even questioning the ambassadors who accompanied him, he, with indescribable folly, surrendered the three forts, and gave immediate orders to those who held them to give them up to the French, who lost no time in taking possession of them. He promised, further, to supply them with money, and to give up the fortresses of Pisa and Leghorn, to be held until the termination of the war.

The French, having now become masters in the Tuscan territory, advanced rapidly, scarcely crediting their own good fortunes, which had so miraculously extricated them from such imminent peril. The opinion

* Parenti, in his *Storia di Firenze* writes, that Piero said on that occasion, 'every one for himself.' For this progress of the French King, see Comines, De la Vigne, Sismondi, Michelet, Guicciardini, Nardi, Parenti, Cerretani, &c., &c. All the histories perfectly agree as to the facts.

became universal among them that Providence favoured their enterprise; and that belief spread not only among the common soldiers, but was taken up by the generals; and more than all, by the King, who considered himself to be that new Cyrus whom the preacher of St. Mark had announced.* In the meanwhile the ambassadors who had accompanied Piero, without uttering one word either to him or to the King, departed full of indignation, and hastened to Florence, where they found confusion, disorder, and rage, the news having just arrived of the disgraceful surrender of the forts.

* Comines (*Memoires*, &c.), who was persuaded of this, frequently repeats — Dieu monstroït conduire l'enterprise.

CHAPTER II.

THE MEDICI EXPELLED FROM FLORENCE.—SAVONAROLA GOES
AS AN AMBASSADOR TO THE FRENCH CAMP.

[NOVEMBER 1494.]

THE month of November, 1494, began in Florence, under unfavourable auspices. The notices which had arrived of fortresses having been given up, which had cost the republic long sieges and enormous sums,* and were the keys of the whole Tuscan territory, had already roused the people. The return of the ambassadors from the French camp still further increased the fury of the whole city. They reported that it would have been easy to have obtained honourable terms from the King, and the baseness and boasting with which Piero had placed the whole Republic at the disposal of Charles, without once submitting the terms to them. All Florence was full of indignation, and the people began to collect in groups in the squares and streets. Old weapons that had been concealed for half a century were seen in the crowds: some with boasting exhibited daggers that had been brandished in the Duomo on the day of the Pazzi conspiracy: strong and powerful men, with fierce countenances, came forth from the

* The fortress of Pietra Santa cost the republic 150,000 ducats, and a two months' siege; that of Sarzana cost them 50,000 florins. See Rinuccini, *Ricordi Storici*, p. 141: this important diary was published in Florence by Aiazzi in 1840. See also Cerretani, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 524: MS. Magliabechian library.

workshops of the manufacturers of wool and silk, which reminded people of the days of the Ciompi and Michele di Lando.* It seemed, as if by some enchantment, time had gone back an entire century, and that the people, who for sixty years had patiently endured tyranny, had resolved to encounter combats and bloodshed to reconquer their liberty.

The general feeling of rage was accompanied by a no less general state of uncertainty and distrust. The Medici had left no guardians of public order, and the populace might at any hour have taken possession of the city, had they known whom to trust, and to whom they might look as a leader. The old friends of liberty had almost all died in the course of the last sixty years, exiled, condemned, or persecuted; the few who had any knowledge of state affairs were men who had always found favour with the Medici; and the mass of the people, escaping from servitude, could do nothing without running into licentiousness.† It was thus one of those frightful occasions in which no one could foresee what excesses, what atrocious deeds, might not be committed. The people ran through the streets in a wild state, like a furious torrent; they looked up with angry threats at the houses of those citizens who had accumulated wealth by

* Jacopo Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

In the year 1378, a political tumult arose among the humbler ranks of the citizens, chiefly the workpeople of different trades, in which the wool-combers (*ciompi*) took a prominent part, one of their number, Michele di Lando, being the leader. They got possession of the government, Lando being elected Gonfaloniere, and they held it for thirty-eight days. See Gino Capponi, *Tumulto de' Ciompi*, reprinted by Barbera, Firenze, 1858.—Tr.

† 'Florence—thou knowest that for sixty years thou hast had an armed force in thy houses. The tyrant carried off thy goods, and thy women, and thou hadst much need of patience. Where didst thou find relief? What government hadst thou then? how constituted I cannot tell. Tell me what able heads hadst thou on thy side?—the best were on theirs; I speak of those who were their adherents,' &c. — Sermon preached on the third Sunday in Lent, 1496.

their oppression; and the only steady purpose they adopted was to go to the Duomo at the time when a sermon was about to be delivered by Savonarola. Such a dense mass of people had never been seen in it; they were so closely packed that no one could stir; and when at length the Friar mounted the pulpit, he looked down upon a fixed immovable surface of heads, with all eyes turned to him. He observed an unusual sternness in their countenances, a more than ordinary excitement, and here and there a cuirass appeared glittering from under the ordinary garment.

Savonarola was the only man who, in those days, could exercise any control over the multitude, who seemed to hang upon his lips and to look to him alone for their safety. One inconsiderate word falling from his mouth might have caused the houses of the most eminent citizens to be sacked, might have brought back the ancient history of civil war, and have made rivers of blood to flow; so great had been the injuries inflicted on the people, and such was their eagerness for revenge. But he abstained from all political topics; and with a heart overflowing with affection, with outstretched arms, and, bending forward over the pulpit, with a voice that resounded through the whole church, he inculcated peace, charity, union. ‘Behold, the sword has descended, the scourges have commenced, the prophecies are being fulfilled; behold the Lord, who is leading on those armies. O Florence! the time for music and dancing is at an end: now is the time for pouring out rivers of tears over your sins. Thy crimes, O Florence; thy crimes, O Rome; thy crimes, O Italy; are the cause of these chastisements. Repent, then; give alms, offer up prayers, be an united people. O my people, I have been to thee as a Father; I have laboured throughout my life to make thee know the truth of faith, and how to lead a good life, and have met with nothing but tribulation,

scorn, and opprobrium. I might have had this compensation at least, that I might have seen thee performing some good deeds. My people--have I ever shown any other desire than to see thee in safety, to see thee united? Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'But 'that I have said many times; I have so often cried out 'to thee, I have so often wept for thee, O Florence, 'that it might have sufficed thee—I turn me to thee, O 'Lord, who died for the love of us and for our transgressions: pardon, O Lord, pardon the Florentine people, 'who desire to be thine.*' He thus proceeded to enjoin charity, faith, united minds, with so much energy, and with so great bodily exertion, that for some days he was quite exhausted, and almost made ill.† These sermons were not among his most eloquent, for his state of agitation prevented anything like reflection or art, but the warmth of affection with which they were delivered quite overcame the people; who from the tumult of the streets came into a haven of peace, and were soothed by the words of the Gospel. So great was the power of that which fell from his lips in those days, that no excess of any kind was committed; and the stormy and dangerous revolt that seemed to be preparing outside the Duomo was calmed down to peacefulness within: a new miracle in the history of Florence, and which all the writers of the time ascribe to the beneficial ascendancy that Savonarola had been able to acquire over the minds of the people.‡

* Sermons on Haggai, delivered in Lent 1494. Haggai was the prophet who spoke to the Hebrews, who had just returned from their captivity in Babylon, urging them to rebuild the temple; it is easy to see, therefore, why Savonarola then expounded that book.

† Calendis igitur Novembris, id est Sanctorum omnium solemnitate, et duobus proximis diebus, voci et lateri non peperci, et (ut omni populo notum est) tantum ex pulpito declamavi, quod infirmior corpore factus, pæne langui.—*Compendium Revelationum*, edit. Quetif. p. 236.

‡ All the histories agree in saying, that Savonarola was at that time the very soul of the multitude. If much was due to him for having

On the 4th of November the Signory summoned the most respectable and prudent citizens to meet in the Palazzo, in order to consult with them what was best to be done. Law and ancient usage forbade any one to speak who had not been called upon by the Signory, and then he was required to speak in favour only of the measure the Signory proposed. But in such a time of tumult no respect was paid either to one Florentine law or to another. At that time men's minds were in far too great a state of agitation; the safety of the country was in question: and the Signory asked the advice of everyone who had any to offer. However, to such a degree had a long servitude subdued their minds, that when Luca Corsini broke through the old custom, and got up without having been personally called upon, and began to speak of the bad state of their affairs, how the city was falling into disorder and ruin, there was a general expression of wonder: some whispered, others coughed, at length his voice was so drowned that he was obliged to stop.*

The speaking, however, was soon resumed by Tanai di Jacopo de' Nerli, a young man of great animation, who supported what Corsini had said; but his voice soon beginning to falter, his father rose, in much confusion, and begged the audience to excuse his son, and not

in the preceding years awakened the people from their long slumber, still more was due to him for having known how to preserve peace and concord among them. We shall show this more fully in the chapters that follow, and the sermons on Haggai give ample proof of it. Guicciardini was one of those who best comprehended and rightly judged Savonarola. In his dialogue *Sul reggimento di Firenze*, p. 28, he makes Bernardo del Nero thus express himself. 'I believe that you are under a great obligation to that friar, for having early laid the storm, and to have been the cause why no experiment was made of that which would have given rise to your form of government; for I do not doubt that would have soon caused some ill-assorted and tumultuary changes.' Guicciardini, in his *Storia di Firenze*, shows very fully how Savonarola alone saved the Republic from disorders.

* Cerretani, *Storia di Firenze*.

to mind what he had said, for he was a young man, and not remarkable for judgement.

At last Piero di Gino Capponi rose: his square figure, his white hair, his sparkling eyes, and a certain air of joyous fearlessness, like a charger who had heard the sound of the war trumpet, made all eyes be turned towards him, and all become silent. They knew him to be a man of few but resolute words, and still more resolute deeds. With a clear voice he said: 'Piero de' Medici is no longer capable of being at the head of affairs; the Republic must look to itself; *it is high time to get rid of being governed by children*.* Let ambassadors be sent to King Charles, and if they meet Piero, let them not salute him, but tell the King that all the evil which has arisen has been caused by Piero, and that the city is friendly to the French name. Let some men of distinction be appointed, who may address the King with all due honour; but at the same time let the commanding officers with their troops be called in from the country, and while kept out of sight in cloisters and other places, let them, together with other armed people, hold themselves in readiness in case of need: so that, while nothing is wanting in honourable dealing with this most Christian prince, nor any backwardness shown to satisfy with money the avaricious nature of the French, we may be quite prepared to show courage and force, should he venture upon any acts, or evince any designs to which we cannot submit. And above every thing,' he said in conclusion, 'do not fail to send, with the ambassadors, the Padre Girolamo Savonarola, to whom the people

* Cerretani has given a very minute account of this meeting (MS. Magliab. carta 594 and following); he, however, puts into Nerli's mouth that which was said by Capponi; to whom, as a man of more mature age, they are more appropriate than to Nerli, who was quite a youth. See Acciajoli, Vita di Piero Capponi, nell' *Archivio Storico*, vol. iv, parte ii.

are at this moment so entirely devoted.’* He might have added, for whom the King has so great a respect, because Charles had conceived an almost religious veneration for the friar, who for many years had predicted his arrival, saying that it was ordained by the Lord.

On the 5th of November the ambassadors were chosen; among them were Capponi, young Nerli, and Savonarola.† The friar left the others to set out immediately for Lucca, where they hoped to meet the King; and he, with two other monks, followed on foot, his usual way of travelling. But before setting out, he again addressed the people, and delivered a sermon which concluded as follows.‡ ‘The Lord has heard your prayers; He has caused a great revolution to end peaceably. He alone has come to give help to the city, when all others had abandoned it. Watch, and you will see what disasters will befall other cities. Persevere, then, O people of Florence, in good works; persevere in peace. If you wish the Lord to persevere in His mercy to yourselves, be merciful to your brethren, to your friends, to your enemies; unless you are so, the chastisements that are preparing for the rest of Italy will fall upon you. The Lord saith unto you, *I will have mercy*; woe to those who disobey his commands.’§ Having preached this sermon, he set out towards Pisa; for the ambassadors on their arrival at Lucca found the King about to depart for that city; and, after having waited upon him, they followed him thither.

* Cerretani and Acciaiuoli, as above quoted. Capponi had always a great veneration for Savonarola and the Convent of St. Mark. Fra Salvestro was his confessor, and in his letters, published in the *Archivio Storico* at the end of the *Life of Capponi*, it may be seen in several of them how highly he estimates the authority of Savonarola.

† See the part of the *Priorista* of Gaddi, published in the above mentioned volume of the *Archivio Storico Ital.* in the Appendix to the *Life of Capponi*. In that, two other ambassadors are named; Pandolfo Rucellai and Giovanni di Niccolo Cavalcanti.

‡ Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*.

§ Third Sermon on Haggai.

Piero de' Medici no sooner perceived that they came in the name of the Republic, without showing any sign of submission to him, than he immediately understood that some great change had taken place in the city. He warmly pressed his own cause upon the King, promising to pay him 200,000 ducats;* he recommended Paolo Orsini to collect his people, to enlist as many men in the country as he could, and to proceed quickly to Florence, where he himself arrived in great haste in the evening of the 8th of November.† Next morning, about eleven o'clock, he presented himself at the Palazzo, accompanied by many people, with the intention of calling a *Parlamento*, and of getting the whole government into his own hands. But the Signory, who had already got notice of his design, would only allow a small number of his followers to be admitted with him, and they received him with great coldness, recommending him to dismiss those who had been enlisted, so as to spare himself and the city useless trouble. Piero was so confounded by this cold and resolute reception, that not being able to decide at once what he should do, he departed, saying that he should consider what course he would take, and would return and tell the Signory his decision. Returning home, he sent orders to Orsini to take possession of the San Gallo Gate, and arming himself, and accompanied by a guard of armed men, he presented himself again at the Palazzo. He found some of the Signory, however, at the entrance, who refused him admission, saying that they had received orders not to admit him unless alone and unarmed, and that only through the small postern gate. He turned back, foaming with rage and menaces. He had not, however,

* Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*. MS. Magliab.—This was in November 1494.

† Jacopo Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

gone more than a few steps when he was accosted by a mace-bearer, who told him that he had been sent to him by Antonio Lorini; he was the only member of the Signory who continued friendly to the Medici. He happened at that time to be the *Proposto*,* and, as such, it belonged to him to propose the subjects for consultation, and he thus had it in his power on that day to prevent anything against Piero from being brought forward; and moreover, as the keys of the tower were in his keeping, he was able to prevent the sounding of the great bell to call the people together. But having ventured to do that which could not now be submitted to, namely, calling back the Medici, in opposition to all his colleagues, Luca Corsini, Jacopo de' Nerli, and Filippozzo Gualterotti, went to the gate, and prevented Piero from entering. But when Piero received the message sent to him by Lorini, he had resumed his proud demeanour, and began to be insolent; upon which Nerli, pushing him back, with expressions of reproach, shut the door in his face.

The mob who had witnessed the proceeding began to raise an outcry, hooting at him, and flourishing their hoods in his face, while boys followed him with hisses and stones. Piero, with his drawn sword in his hand, uncertain whether to make use of it or to sheath it, took refuge among his own adherents, in a state of terror, alarmed by the voices of the same people, whom, a very short time before, he had trampled upon with so much insolence. While some of Piero's party escaped, others were pursued, and on their way they met the Bargello, Antonio dell' Aquila, who, wishing to render assistance to the Medici, was laid hold of by the people, who, although without arms themselves,

* The *Proposto*, or President, was changed every two or three days, and sometimes every day.—(Alteration of the note by the Author).

disarmed and stripped him, and those who were with him. They led him back to his palace, and made him liberate the prisoners confined there. The insurgents then returned; and under this singular circumstance, that the arms they had taken from the palace of the Bargello were the first that were used in the defence of their newly-acquired liberty.* But now a continuous tolling of the great bell of the Palazzo was heard, and the people flocked to the Piazza, the great paved square in front of it; they shut up their shops, left their houses, and sallied forth with hatchets, swords, bludgeons, or any other weapons they could find. Some of the older citizens had attired themselves in old-fashioned dresses, brandishing rusted arms, that recalled the days of the Republic; and they were met with shouts of joy every time they appeared in the crowd.†

The people had scarcely collected in the Piazza when, all of a sudden, there appeared, mounted on a mule, and covered with dust, Francesco Valori, just arrived from Pisa, where he had conversed with the Florentine ambassadors. The people crowded round him, eager for news, and he found himself in a moment in the thick of the crowd. Valori had been an old partisan of the Medici, had often co-operated with Lorenzo, and was one of the five citizens sent by him to Savonarola to advise him to be more moderate in his

* The Bargello was a kind of sheriff or head of police, and in those days, and long after, his palace was partly used as a prison. That still exists, and is now called the Bargello. It is a vast building, erected in the early part of the fourteenth century; it was first occupied as the palace of the Podestà, or chief criminal judge. See *l'Observatore Fiorentino*, vol. v. p. 103. It was used as a prison as late as 1859, and the political offenders of 1848 were confined in it. It is now being converted by the present Government into a great archæological Museum.—Tr.

† Jacopo Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, p. 41, and following (ediz. Arbib.) Rinuccini, *Ricordi Storici*; Gaddi, *Priorista*; Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*, Cerretani, *Storia di Firenze*.

sermons. But from that moment he began to feel a sympathy for the friar, and gradually became one of his warmest followers. The bad government of Piero made him more decided to join the popular party, which was much more suited to his natural character. He had, in fact, all the qualities of a leader of the people; impetuous and bold, not very wise, but very open-hearted, rushing with eagerness into all he undertook, and thus felt himself quite at home in the midst of a tumult. That very day, sitting on his mule, and covered as he was with dust, he began to harangue the people. He told them how the ambassadors had found the King at Lucca well disposed towards them, but that when they followed him to Pisa, they there ascertained that Piero de' Medici, before leaving the French camp, had made numerous solicitations and promises, all to the injury of their city. So soon as he saw that the people were roused into a state of fury he put himself at their head, and, calling out '*Down with the *palle!**'* led them to the assault of the Medicean palace.†

Piero, in the mean time, had sent for Orsini and his armed followers, and having put on a suit of armour, he proposed to return with this force to the Palazzo. His brother Giovanni (Cardinal, and afterwards Leo X.), had set out before him, parading the streets, and seeking to rouse the people in their favour, with the cry *Palle, palle!* No one responded, and he was even threatened by many in the streets, and from the windows. Arrived at the Church of San Bartolommeo, he saw the mob, led on by Valori, armed, and in a highly excited state, and he then made a hasty retreat. When he got back to the Medicean palace, he found that Piero had already taken to flight; having received a decree of the Signory

* The six balls (*palle*), in the arms of the Medici.—TR.

† See the authors quoted above.

declaring him and the Cardinal rebels; although aware that his brother was retreating, he had not sufficient courage to wait for him, but collecting together the few people he had about him, he made for the San Gallo Gate. There he made his last attempt to rouse the people living in that quarter of the city, and belonging to the humbler classes, who had always been much attached to his house. But he raised his voice in vain; in vain did he scatter gold in the streets; even the lowest of the people, who were hastening to the Palazzo, treated him with contempt. He then, at length, felt convinced that it was useless to hope any longer, and that it was time to think of saving his life. Scorned, and humiliated by the many misfortunes which had befallen him in so short a space of time, he took the road to Bologna. He had not gone many steps when he saw the city gate shut against him. He was accompanied by his brother Giuliano,* and a few soldiers; the latter more terrified than himself, from the dread of being attacked, as his companions, and cut to pieces by the peasants; and most of them left him before they were out of the Tuscan territory. At length he reached Bologna, wearied and faint with the long journey, with his small and miserable escort, and he met there with a very rude reception from Bentivoglio, who said to him, ‘I would rather have been cut to pieces than have abandoned my dominion.’ He thought differently when he was himself exposed to a similar danger, for this proud Bentivoglio basely took to flight. Piero, more and more depressed by adverse fortune, continued his journey to Venice, where he met with a courteous reception, and found repose. Even there, however, he had the mortification to find that Soderini, the Florentine ambassador, had declared in favour of the new government. But the

* Afterwards Duke of Nemours.

Signory of Venice treated him with those honours which they were accustomed to pay to deposed princes, and thus he found some comfort in his affliction.

It appeared to him as if in these few days he had lived a century, and that he had awakened from a long dream ; he then began to comprehend what a foolish part he had acted, with what baseness he had abandoned the state, without ever having been threatened by any real danger, and at the very time when Charles had declared in his favour. It is certain that if, in those early days, he had shown resolution, he might have suppressed, or at least checked, the rebellion in its birth ; secure as he was of the assistance of France, then so near at hand.* In fact, the King had so strongly espoused his cause, that messengers had already arrived at Venice, inviting him to return to Florence. But he had not sufficient courage to venture a second time in the midst of that turbulent people, whose threatenings seemed still to strike him with terror. The Cardinal had also by this time arrived in Venice. He had in his flight shown greater courage, and had been longer in leaving the city. He escaped in the disguise of a monk, but not without great fatigue and serious danger ; having first collected all the most valuable things he could get hold of in the general disorder, and brought them in haste to the monks of St. Mark, and so saved them. The same was done by several of the citizens who were conscious of being even more obnoxious to the people. So high was the opinion generally en-

* This is the opinion not only of Nardi and other historians, but of Savonarola himself, for he attributed the expulsion of the Medici to Divine aid. 'God has relieved you of this strong armed man : let no one say—It was I who did it ; let no man boast of it and say—I was the cause of it ; for he has not had strength to overthrow so great a power, one strongly armed. God has been stronger than he ; He has deprived him of his spoils, and of his own property, and has relieved you from his dominion over you.'—Sermon on the third Sunday in Lent, 1496.

tained of the honour of the monks, that at the very time when their convent was the centre of the popular party, the partisans of the Medici and the Cardinal himself knew no place where their most precious effects could be deposited with greater safety.

While these events were passing, the Signory had offered a reward of 5,000 florins to anyone who should bring Piero or the Cardinal alive to them, and 2,000 if delivered up dead. They, at the same time, took measures to efface all memory of the past: they erased from the walls of the palace of the Podestà the names of the rebels of 1434; and from the gate of the custom house those of the rebels of 1478.* They recalled the families of the Neroni Diotisalvi, of the Pazzi, and many others who had been banished or imprisoned, among whom were Lorenzo and Giovanni de' Medici, cousins of Piero, who, as soon as they came back, took down from their house the family arms of the *palle*, and substituted those of the Florentine people, changing their own name from Medici to Popolani. Thus had already begun that flattery of the populace who but a few days before had been treated with scorn.

The turbulence went on increasing, and the mob seemed to be becoming intoxicated by the license of the general disorder. They set forth to sack the house of Giovanni Guidi, the notary and secretary of the Riformagioni, and that of Antonio Miniati, the manager of the Monte,† both of whom had been confidential agents of the Medici, and cunning councillors in finding means of laying intolerable taxes on the people, so that they were objects of general detestation in Florence. In like manner they sacked the house of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, and that garden of St Mark's where he had deposited so

* It was in 1434, that Cosimo de' Medici returned from banishment; and the conspiracy of the Pazzi was in 1478.

† The State Bank.

many valuable objects of art. They had not yet begun to shed blood, although very many were much inclined to do so, and they would certainly have proceeded to that excess, had not the partisans of Savonarola done all in their power to prevent it, if the arrival of ambassadors from the King of France had not been hourly expected, and had not the Signory, by the most severe proclamations, endeavoured to put a stop to the riots.

The state of bad humour was increased by the arrival from Pisa of the ambassadors who had been sent to King Charles, and who returned with very unsatisfactory information. It had been intimated to him that the city was quite friendly to him, and that they were preparing to receive him with all the honours suitable to his rank; that all they asked was, that as he would be received as a friend, he would conduct himself as such; that he would show a perfectly good understanding, so that the public joy might be fully made manifest. The King made no other reply than—‘All will be settled when we come to the great *Villa*.’ From so cold a reception it was very evident that the earnest solicitations of Piero de’ Medici, his prayers, his promises of money, and obedience in everything, had completely won over the King to the support of his cause. The consequence was, that the ambassadors returned without having been able to effect anything; and the only assurance they could give was, that the King was by no means well disposed towards the Republic.

But when the ambassadors failed, the Friar of St. Mark went alone to the French camp, and, passing through a multitude of armed men, he found himself in the presence of the King, sitting among his generals. Meeting with a courteous reception, he without much preamble commenced a short sermon, which he delivered with a loud voice, and in an almost commanding tone—‘Most Christian King—thou art an instrument in the

hand of the Lord, who sends thee to deliver Italy from her afflictions, as, for many years before now, I have predicted, and sends thee to reform the church, which lies prostrate in the dust. But if thou be not just and merciful, if thou pay not respect to the city of Florence, to its women, its citizens, its liberty, if thou dost forget the work for which the Lord sends thee, He will then select another to fulfil it, and will let the hand of his wrath fall upon thee, and will punish thee with awful scourges. These things I say to thee in the name of the Lord.*

The King and his generals appeared to listen with attention to the menacing words of Savonarola, and to receive them with the most earnest faith. They were, in fact, won over to the belief that their army was, in truth, guided by the Lord for a providential purpose; and the King had a profound veneration for the man who had prophesied his advent, and promised a happy issue to his undertaking; so that the short sermon, which had instilled a certain amount of terror into his mind, made him resolve to behave more honourably to the Florentines; to whom Savonarola, who came back a short time after the other ambassadors, brought better hopes.

* This sermon is fully given in his *Compendium Revelationum*. In our narrative of all the above facts, we have chiefly followed Nardi, who is minute, diligent, and exact; but we have also availed ourselves of much that is to be found in Cerretani, Parenti, Rinuccini, Gaddi, as well as in Guicciardini, Machiavelli, Comines, &c.

CHAPTER III.

REVOLT OF PISA.—ENTRANCE OF CHARLES VIII INTO FLORENCE :
HIS TREATY WITH THE REPUBLIC AND HIS DEPARTURE.

[NOVEMBER 1494.]

THE affairs of Tuscany, by the increase of much disorder, were getting into a worse state. On the same day that the Medici were expelled from Florence, the Pisans rose in rebellion, to recover their lost liberty. Ever since they had been subjected to the yoke of Florence, or, as they said, to a foreign yoke, they were eager to throw it off. With the loss of their independence, they saw their trade and industrial occupations ruined, their population diminished, and all order in their civil affairs destroyed: the majority of the people, therefore, preferred exile to servitude. But on the approach of the French army their hopes revived; and The Moor, who always loved to fish in troubled waters, and had formed the design of becoming master of Pisa, instigated them to continue in their rebellion, promising them all kinds of assistance, and secretly endeavouring to win over some of those who were about the person of the King. The consequence was, that Charles had scarcely entered the city than the people ran shouting through the streets, tore down the Florentine arms, and threw the Marzocco * into the Arno, replacing it by a statue of the King; they next sacked the houses of the Florentine authorities,

* The figure of a lion seated on its haunches, with its paw on a shield

whom the furious mob expelled from the city. Liberty and independence were proclaimed, those who had been banished were recalled, and arms, men, and money, were collected, to begin that celebrated and ill-omened Pisan war, which was to waste the strength of two republics, hardly yet regenerated, and to destroy many valiant citizens, without any advantage to either side.

The King, on witnessing these insurrectionary movements, was at first inclined to favour them, but when he found that they had expelled the Florentine authorities, he showed displeasure. He would have liked the Pisans to make a stand for the restoration of their liberties, but at the same time to continue subject to the Florentines! The people, however, having once resorted to revolt, lost no time in going forward with it. Charles took no further steps in the matter, except to leave a garrison in the fort; and he left the city without seeming to be aware of what was going on, or reflecting on the consequences of the hopes he had led the Pisans to entertain. By this conduct, before he had even set foot in Florence, he had dealt the Republic a heavy blow, by allowing their subjects to rise in rebellion under his very eyes, and with French soldiers in their city: a most dangerous example for their whole territory, and which, before long, was imitated by Arezzo, Montepulciano, and other cities. He continued his march, stopping only some days at Signa, waiting until the tumults in Florence should subside, and until the honours that were to be paid to him on his entrance should be duly prepared. Fresh ambassadors were sent from Florence to Signa, to request before proceeding farther that he would settle the terms of a treaty; but the only answer he returned was—‘All will be settled in the great *Villa*.’*

bearing a lily, the emblem of the Republic, put up by the Florentines in their public places. The origin of the name is unexplained.—TR.

* Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*; Michelet, *Renaissance*; Leo, *Storia*

From all these causes, the government continued in a state of great uncertainty and confusion: the Medici had just been expelled, the old government set aside, the new one not yet organised; the King entering without any stipulations having been agreed upon, at the head of a powerful army, already deeply stained with Italian blood. There was certainly quite enough to create alarm; but, fortunately, there were found some citizens of much prudence and firmness of character, who offered their advice to the Signory. Amongst them was Piero Capponi, who, in those days, proved himself to be the right arm of the Republic, as Savonarola was its head and soul. Whilst Savonarola preached charity, peace and union, Capponi, seeing the necessity of good council and action, took care to provide men and arms. The houses were furnished with all kinds of provisions of war; stakes and planks for barricades were got ready, the cloisters and court yards were filled with recruits, amounting it is said to 6,000, who were to be ready to come forth in defence of the Republic at the first sound of the bell.*

Companies of the French, of fifteen or sixteen at a time, were seen entering the town, with a martial and free and easy air, and walking about unarmed, with a piece of chalk in their hand, marking houses for billeting the troops. Though affecting a kind of contemptuous indifference, they could not conceal their surprise in seeing so splendid a city with magnificent buildings; and every new street they entered they stood confounded by the sights presented to their eyes. What more than anything else attracted their attention were those palaces of severe grandeur which looked like impregnable fortresses; and towers still

d'Italia; Guicciardini, Machiavelli, Nardi, Parenti, Cerretani, Rinuccini, Gaddi, Comines, &c.

* Jacopo Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

denoting fierce and sanguinary civil wars. But on the next day, the 15th of November, they witnessed an event which struck them almost with terror. Whether by chance or by design, a report was spread through the town that Piero de' Medici had arrived at one of the gates: the great bell tolled continuously, the streets were all in motion with people in a state of furious excitement; the very earth seemed to bring forth armed men, all hastening to the Piazza; the gates of the palaces were closed, the towers were armed, and already they had prepared barriers for the streets. On this occasion the French got their first lesson in raising barricades. It was soon proved that the report was false, and the tumult subsided as rapidly as it had arisen. But a deep impression was made on the minds of the foreigners; they saw that manœuvres and battalions hemmed-in in those narrow streets would be almost useless against a mode of fighting so new, and to them so utterly unknown. The Florentines regarded the troops with a sort of familiar indifference, as much as to say, 'We shall see.' The people on recovering their liberty looked upon themselves as the lords of the universe, and seemed to believe that they had almost nothing left to fear.*

In the meantime the Medicean Palace† was being prepared with much splendour for the reception of the King, the houses of the principal citizens being assigned to his officers; the streets through which the procession was to pass had awnings stretched across them, and the windows had carpets and tapestry suspended from them, as on holidays. On the day appointed, the 17th of November, the Signory were in attendance in a balcony erected near the San Frediano Gate; many of the young

* Nardi, Parenti, Cerretani, Sismondi, &c.

† That now called the Palazzo Riccardi, in the street that used to be called the Via Larga, but now the Via Cavour.—TR.

Florentines of the first families went out to meet the King, who at two o'clock in the afternoon made his solemn entry. As he approached, the Signory rose, and Luca Corsini, to whom the duty had been assigned, advanced to read an address that had been prepared. But just at that moment rain began to fall, the horses would not stand, but pushed against one another, and the whole ceremony was thus thrown into confusion. Gaddi alone, who was steward of the Palazzo, had however sufficient presence of mind to make his way, and contrived in the hubbub to say a few words to the King in French, suited to the occasion; after which, Charles went forward, under a rich canopy. His whole appearance presented a very strong contrast to the martial air of so numerous and powerful an army, at the head of which he was placed. He was almost a monster; with an immense head, a long nose, a wide mouth, a very small body, extraordinarily small legs, and deformed feet. He wore a black velvet suit, with a cloak of gold brocade; and rode a tall beautiful charger, and advanced with a kind of martial air, holding a levelled lance, then a sign of conquest, all of which only showed off his miserable person the more conspicuously. On each side of him rode the Cardinals of San Piero in Vincola and of San Malo, together with some of his marshals. The royal body guard followed, consisting of a hundred archers, selected from amongst the handsomest youths of France, and two hundred knights of France on foot, in splendid dresses, and armed. Then came the Swiss guards with their brilliant uniforms of various colours, having halberts of burnished steel, their officers wearing rich plumes on their helmets. The fierceness of the mountaineer, and the pride of being considered the finest infantry in Europe, might alike be read in their countenances; most of them had laid aside their cuirass, as if to show that they scorned to go into battle except

with an uncovered breast. The centre consisted of the Gascons, short, light, active men, whose numbers seemed to multiply as they marched forward. But the most splendid appearance of all was made by the cavalry, in which were to be found the most noble young men of France; they had engraved armour, mantles of the richest brocade, banners of velvet embroidered with gold, chains of gold, and ornaments of the same precious metal. The cuirassiers presented a hideous appearance, with their horses looking like monsters, from their ears and tails being cut short. The archers were extraordinarily tall men; they came from Scotland and other northern countries, and, according to a historian of the time, they looked more like wild beasts than men.*

Such a variety of nations, of dresses, and of arms, united with so much order and discipline, was a new and marvellous sight in Florence, and in all Italy, where there were no standing armies, mercenary troops being alone known. It is not possible for us to state the number of men who accompanied the King on his entrance into Italy, for the artillery had gone direct to Rome by another route; many fortresses had been garrisoned, and a separate army had advanced through Romagna. Gaddi,† who was present, estimates those who entered Florence at 12,000; Rinuccini, also an eye witness, gives a much smaller number, others a still greater; be that as it may, the city and suburbs were both filled by the French army.

The procession passed over the Ponte Vecchio (the old bridge), which was ornamented, and on which bands of music had been placed, then turned into the Piazza, where triumphal cars and statues had been collected, and, by the Canto dei Pazzi, reached the space behind the Duomo,

* Cerretani, *Storia di Firenze*.

† The author of the *Priorista*, the same who addressed the King on his entrance.

and marched round to the front. The people accompanied the procession with loud cries of *Viva Francia*; but the King could do no more than with a stupid smile utter some Italian words, totally inappropriate. Having entered the Church, he found the Signory already arrived there, who, on account of the somewhat rough manners of the soldiers, had been obliged to find their way thither through by-streets. After prayers had been offered up, the King was established in the sumptuous palace of the Medici, and his soldiers were sent to their quarters. That night and the following the whole city was illuminated, the day was passed in feasting, and at last they began to discuss the subject of the treaty.*

The syndics elected by the Signory to transact that business were Guidantonio Vespucci, Domenico Bonsi, Francesco Valori, and Piero Capponi; all of them men of the highest reputation in the city. Vespucci was eminently learned in the laws and affairs of the state; Bonsi had conducted some embassies with much honour; Valori, called afterwards the Cato of Florence, was considered, as we have seen, the leader of the people; and Capponi, who has been already more than once mentioned, was a man of very extraordinary powers. He was born in 1447, of an ancient Florentine family, who had always been fast friends of liberty, and who had rendered themselves illustrious by many noble deeds. His father educated him for commerce, recommending him to abandon politics, as the times were inclining in a very bad direction; and Piero applied himself to business with so much earnestness that many reproached him with a too great love of gain. He had just completed his thirtieth year

* We have taken the whole of this narrative chiefly from Nardi, Gaddi, and Rinuccini, who were present at the entrance of Charles. Cerrateni gives a most minute description of the French army; and several particulars are contained in Parenti, Guicciardini, and Comines; among modern writers, we may especially mention Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.*, and *Histoire des Français*; Michelet, *Renaissance*.

when Lorenzo de' Medici, who prided himself on being a good judge of men, offered him some embassies, which he willingly accepted, and which he conducted with admirable dexterity. On those occasions Capponi showed a singular aptitude in finding out the characters of men, and a most remarkable facility in acquiring an influence over the minds of the persons with whom he was dealing, and more particularly over those who prided themselves on being very dark and impenetrable. Ferdinand of Naples, and Alphonso his son, placed such entire confidence in him that they consulted him in preference to their own generals and ministers. But if Capponi found it easy to pass from trade to diplomacy, still more was that the case when he directed his attention to military affairs; for he then found that he had not been born either to stand behind the banker's counter or to conduct treaties, but rather to be a leader of armies. It was chance that led him to this discovery. He was then a Commissioner of the Republic in the camp of Alphonso of Arragon, when the latter came with an army to support the Duke of Ferrara. The Neapolitan troops had been defeated by those of the Pope, and Alphonso had so entirely lost hope, that he would certainly have retreated, had not Capponi succeeded in inspiring him and his men with fresh courage. Adding deeds to words, he led them on to battle, proving himself not only ready to command, but also, when it was right, to obey.* From that day forward he was always in the thick of the fray; and the Republic, finding that they had all at once got so valiant a captain, always employed him in the most arduous enterprises. The more difficult the duty they laid on Capponi, the more willingly he undertook it, and he was al-

* This fact, honourable as it was to Capponi, shows on the other hand the miserable state of the art of war then existing in Italy. Acciaïoli, *Vita di Piero Capponi*, in the *Archivio Storico*, vol. iv. p. 2.

ways ready to act either as commander or common soldier,—a willingness that, in the end, was the cause of his death.

Capponi had always been a warm friend of a popular government, and an enemy of the Medicean tyranny; but the desire to lead an active life overruled all his other feelings, and therefore during the life of Lorenzo he had held many public employments. After the death of that prince, he would show no favour to the government of Piero, but at once joined the popular party; which held him in high estimation, and now placed the salvation of the Republic in his hands. Capponi was better fitted than any other man to deal with Charles. He had been several times ambassador in France, and had learned to estimate the character both of the King himself and of the French people, of whom he used to say, ‘When our Italians once come face to face with the French, they will then see that they have no reason to fear them.’* The whole weight of the serious and difficult negotiations therefore fell naturally upon him; who, seeing that the destinies of a whole people were in his hands, roused up all his energy, and he became almost greater than himself.

Meanwhile the mother and wife of Piero de’ Medici obtained access to the King and his advisers; they gave, they promised, and offered that should Piero be brought back, the King and they should be lords of the city.† By these inducements the French leaned more and more in favour of the Medici, and the syndics of the Republic met with a cold reception from the King, who, surrounded by his generals, advanced new

* Letters of Capponi, published in the Appendix to his Life, p. 55, quoted above. See also what Marquis Gino Capponi has said at the end of the first volume of the *Archivio Storico*.

† Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*.

and more outrageous pretensions; saying, among other things, that he had come into the city as a conqueror, having entered it with his lance levelled. Such speeches had no other effect than to exasperate the feelings of the people, and led to no other result; they were, however, repeated, and became even more offensive. When, however, in the presence of the syndics, the King had the hardihood to allow some expressions to escape him in favour of Piero de' Medici, the countenances of the Republicans darkened considerably; and very soon the whole aspect of the city was changed. The Signory immediately convoked a council in the Palazzo; they sent for the principal citizens, represented to them the danger they were in, and that it was necessary they should hold themselves in readiness to come forth armed, to lead on the people so soon as they should hear the sound of the great bell. The citizens had already got some notice of what had passed, and townsmen and Frenchmen began to look angrily at each other; high words passed between them, and sometimes they came to blows.

One of those quarrels gave rise to a serious tumult. A body of French soldiers were conducting some Italians, bound with cords, whom they had made prisoners in the Lunigiana, and were obliging them to ask for money, in charity, to enable them to pay for being set at liberty, threatening otherwise to put them to death. A spectacle so barbarous roused the anger of the Florentines to such a degree that some of the more daring youths cut the cords and allowed the prisoners to escape, to the great indignation of the French, who could not recapture them. A fight ensued, and the people maintaining their ground, others joined them from all quarters, so as considerably to increase the number of the combatants. The Swiss, imagining by the riot that the King was in danger, were making for the palace, but

meeting with resistance in a part of the town called the Borgo Ognissanti, and trying to force their way, they were received with such showers of stones from the windows that they were obliged to give way. They had been fighting with the people about an hour, when some of the King's officers and a number of the principal citizens, sent by the Signory, put a stop to the fight. This affair,* however, taught the French a serious lesson, which made them from that time lower their proud tone, and showed them that, in order to conquer Florence, something more would be necessary than to enter it *with a piece of chalk in the hand and a levelled lance*.† A city that the sound of a bell could convert into an armed castle, barricade streets, and vomit forth stones, projectiles of all sorts, and fireworks from every window, was something so mysterious and terrible, that even that proud Swiss infantry evidently perceived that an army shut in by such walls might easily be destroyed, and they were not a little dismayed.‡

The Signory took advantage of the right moment, and, assisted by several of the foreign ambassadors, succeeded at last in moderating the King's temper. The extraordinary demands he had made were somewhat abated; there was no more talk either of Piero or of a conquered city; and the terms were almost agreed upon, by which he should retain possession of the fortresses for two years, giving them up sooner if the war was sooner brought to an end; and it was further agreed to

* 'Il tumulto di Borgo Ognissanti salvò la Città.' Gino Capponi, *Archivo Storico*, i. 348, 1842.—TR.

† The King and his people were continually using these words as a boast.

‡ See the description of this tumult in Cerretani (Magl. palch. iii. cod. 74, &c.) p. 21. Also Parenti (Magl. MS.) p. 74. Cerretani concludes the narrative with these words:—'The defence was most courageous, and caused the French no small fear; who, although in greater number, and acting in a body with arms, got frightened like women.'

give him a large sum of money. But just as matters were on the point of being settled, new dissensions arose. Charles was full of all the promises that had been made to him by Piero, and by his wife and mother; he demanded an amount of money which the Republic could in no way pay, without severely oppressing the citizens. Thus fresh exasperations arose on both sides, and communications were perpetually passing from the Signory to the King, and from him to them, without any conclusion being come to, for Charles obstinately adhered to his demands, and Capponi felt some difficulty to restrain his present excitement and natural impetuosity. The King then directed his secretary to read his *ultimatum*, saying, that he would not recede one jot from it. The syndics again refused to agree to it, upon which the King, turning round in a rage, said, with a menacing tone, 'We shall sound our trumpets.' Capponi instantly flamed up, and snatching the paper from the hand of the secretary, he tore it in pieces in the face of the King, saying words which became immortal, 'And we shall sound our bells.'* They were

* Marquis Gino Capponi observes on this speech 'He had the good 'fortune' to live in one of those moments which serves to mark a life-time.'¹ Cerretani, Parenti, Guicciardini, Nardi, Machiavelli, Acciaiuoli, *Vita del Capponi*.

¹ 'Ma la fortuna gli diede a cogliere un dì quei rari momenti che bastano ad una vita; e gli concessi in un punto solo di tutta sfogare quella innata virtù, che forse dormiva senza ciò, oscura ed inutile, in tormentosa scioperatezza. E quel momento gli procacciò la più desiderabile trà le felicità umane, avere cioè ben meritato della sua patria, e acquistar fama trà posterì.'—*Archivio Storico Italiano*, vol. i. p. 361.

But fortune put it in his power to seize one of those rare moments, which is sufficient to satisfy the ambition of a whole life; and which enabled him, on one single occasion, to display the full force of that innate power, which without such an opportunity might have lain dormant, obscure, and unprofitable, in irksome inaction; and that moment conferred on him the most enviable of all human felicities, that of having deserved well of his country, and of having established an honoured name in future ages.—TR.

spoken in such a tone that, in a few hours, that was settled which prayers and the comings and goings of many days had failed to accomplish.*

The terms of the treaty were as follows:—That there should be a free intercourse and cordial friendship between the King and the Republic; that their subjects should receive mutual protection; that the King should receive the title of restorer and protector of Florentine liberty; that he was to receive the sum of 120,000 florins, in three instalments; that the fortresses were not to be retained by him longer than two years, and were to be given up so soon as the enterprise against Naples was brought to a conclusion; and that the Pisans should receive a pardon so soon as they should acknowledge obedience to Florence. It was at the same time agreed that the promised reward for the capture of the Medici should be withdrawn, but that the confiscation of the property of Cardinal Giovanni and his brother Giuliano should remain in force until they had paid the debts left by Piero, who was to be required to remain at a distance of 200 miles, and his brothers at a distance of 100 miles, from the Tuscan territory. The treaty having been drawn up in due legal form was signed in the Duomo; and that same evening the city was again illuminated; but the people showed that they had no longer the affection for the King which they exhibited on the former occasion.†

* The following lines of Machiavelli in his *Dicennali* are well known:—

Lo strepito dell' armi e de' cavalli
Non potè far che non fosse sentita
La voce d' un Cappon fra cento Galli.

It is obvious that an English translation must miss the point:

The din of arms and horses
Could not prevent the cry
Of one Capon being heard
Among the crowing of a hundred cocks.

† The treaty between Charles and the Republic was first published in the *Archivio Storico* by the Marquis Capponi, who added the above beautiful reflections.

It seemed, however, that no sooner was one difficulty removed than another arose. After all had been concluded, the King did not show the least inclination to depart. The city was full of French soldiers, quartered in private houses, and the Italian soldiers were kept in concealment all over the town; the shops were closed, trade was suspended, everything was in a state of uncertainty and disorder; and continued quarrels between the natives and the foreigners created alarms for more dangerous consequences. In the night, robberies and murders were frequent; a state of things to which the people of Florence were wholly unaccustomed, and even the slightest disturbance seemed to threaten a rising of the people. This state of things continued day after day, and the good citizens implored, by all the means in their power, that the King would depart, but in vain. He had fallen back into his natural state of indolence, and it seemed as if he had no intention to move from Florence. The people were kept in this state of suspense by not seeing any means by which they could oblige him to come to a decision.

In this difficulty they again had recourse to the authority of Savonarola, who was at this time entirely occupied with endeavours to keep the city quiet; and who, by his words of peace, had been able, in those times of uproar and danger, to render a service not less important than that which had been achieved by Capponi's heroic courage. The exhortations of the friar in those days had always been directed to the general good. 'Let the people lay aside all hatred, all ambition; let them go to the King's palace with upright minds, with a desire to seek the common good, and not that of individuals; and with a firm desire to establish unity and concord in the city. Then you will be truly acceptable to the Lord.' He enjoined upon every class of the citizens, and impressed upon every individual in par-

ticular, that his true advantage in this life, and in that which is to come, consisted in defending their liberties, and in securing unity and concord.* Being solicited to go to the King to endeavour to persuade him to depart, he at once accepted the commission, and presented himself at the royal residence. The officers and the barons seemed disposed to refuse him admission, for they feared that the appearance of the friar might prevent the sacking of the sumptuous palace, which they had designed. But, remembering the veneration which the King had always shown him, they yielded to his entreaties, and allowed him to pass. Charles, surrounded by his barons, gave him a most gracious reception, and Savonarola only used these few words:—‘Most Christian prince, thy stay causes great damage to this city, and to thy enterprise. Thou lovest time, forgetting the duty that Providence hath imposed upon thee, to the great injury of thine own spiritual welfare, and the world’s glory. Listen, then, to the servant of God. Proceed on thy way without further tarrying. Do not desire to bring ruin on this city, nor provoke the anger of the Lord.’†

* See the sermons on Haggai. Those sermons delivered in Advent 1494, were taken down, as spoken, by that same friar Stefano da Codiponte, whom we have mentioned above, and they were printed at Venice in 1544. The Venetian editions, as we have said, are very incorrect, and the editors have very often made mistakes in the titles they have given, and in the notices they have added at the beginnings and conclusions of some of the sermons. Thus, in the case of those now under consideration, the fourth sermon is given as that preached after the expulsion of the Medici, and the fifth, as that delivered after the friar’s return from Pisa; which has led Perrens into the mistake that Savonarola set out from Florence for Pisa after the expulsion of the Medici. But if we read those Sermons on Haggai, and observe that the first, second, and third were delivered on the 1st, 2nd, and 6th of November, we shall find that the fourth was preached after his return from Pisa, and that he was not in Florence when the expulsion took place; as is proved by the chronicles of the time, and by the date when the ambassadors were chosen, namely, the 5th of November.

† Besides the biographers, Savonarola himself mentions those facts on several occasions. See his xxv. Sermon on Micah, delivered on October 28, 1496.

At last, on the 28th of November, at the twenty-second hour of the evening,* the King took his departure, together with his army, leaving behind them a very unfavourable impression on the people of Florence. Among the most just grounds for their complaints against the French was, the discovery how the splendid palace which, with so much generosity and good faith, had been given up to the King as a residence, had been sacked; and not only by the soldiery and the inferior officers, but also by the generals and barons, and even by the King himself, who carried off many objects of great value: among other things, he stole a gem with the representation of an unicorn, which Comines considers to have been worth 7,000 ducats. What others did, after such an example, may be easily conceived; ‘they took possession,’ says Comines, ‘of everything that tempted their avarice.’† In this way the splendid and marvellous collections of the Medici were scattered; for the little that the French did not steal was left in such a state that there was nothing to be done but to sell them.‡ Nevertheless, so great was the joy of the inhabitants on seeing themselves freed at last from the dangerous incumbrance of a foreign army, that no one thought of his losses; but on the contrary, they went to the churches to offer up public thanks to the Almighty; the people in the streets resumed their almost forgotten gaiety, and the Signory again began to think of providing against the urgent wants of the state.

The appearance of the city, in the interval, had entirely changed. The partisans of the Medici seemed to have disappeared as if by magic; the popular party were left in undisturbed possession of everything;

* About three in the afternoon.—TR.

† Comines, *Mémoires*, liv. viii. c. ix.

‡ Comines as above; Sismondi, *Hist. des Répub. Ital.* c. xciii.

and the direction of the will of the whole people was left to Savonarola. They declared him to have been a true prophet of all that had come to pass, that he alone had been able to control the mind of the King when he came to Florence, and that he alone had induced him to leave it; they looked, therefore, to him for counsel and direction in everything. And as if the men of the olden time wished to pass out of sight, and yield their place to the new, some of those who had occupied a conspicuous position in the Medicean court had died in the course of the last few months. Politian had died on September 24, 'with as much infamy and abuse as a man could well be loaded with.* He was accused of numberless vices, and of enormous profligacy; but the true cause of all this hatred was rather to be traced to Piero de' Medici having become so universally detested, and to Politian's death having occurred near the time when Piero and his adherents were expelled.† Nor were these angry feelings at all mitigated by the knowledge that the last words that fell from the lips of the illustrious poet and accomplished scholar were words of contrition. He had requested that his body might be buried in a Dominican dress, in the Church of St. Mark; where, in fact, his ashes repose by the side of those of Pico della Mirandola, who died the very day that Charles VIII., entered Florence.‡ Pico had also for

* Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*, i. 51, Sept. 1494.

† 'The abuse with which Politian was loaded, was not caused so much by his vices, as by the hatred entertained in our city for Piero de' Medici.' Parenti, *loc. cit.*

‡ The two inscriptions, which may still be read on the wall of the nave of the Church of St Mark, are as follows:—

D. M. S.

IOHANNES IACET HIC MIRANDULA CAETERA NORŪ
ET TAGUS ET GANGES FORSAN ET ANTIPODES
OB. AN. SAL. MCCCCLXXXIII. VIX. AN. XXXII.
HIERONIMUS BENIVIENUS NE DISIUNCTUS POST
MORTEM LOCUS OSSA SEPARET QUOR. ANIMAS
IN VITA CONTIUNXIT AMOR HOC HUMO
SUPPOSITA PONI CURAVIT

some time expressed a desire to assume the dress of the friars of St Mark, but having hesitated too long, his wish could not be fulfilled, as death carried him off at the early age of thirty-two.* While on his death-bed he asked Savonarola not to allow him to go down to the tomb without having been first clothed in that habit.

The end of those two illustrious Italians recalled to mind the last hours and the confession of the Magnificent; for to many it appeared that the Medicean society, on leaving the world, had wished to acknowledge their crimes, and ask absolution from the people they had so grievously oppressed, and from the friar who might be considered the living and speaking representative of that people. Singular it was, that they all looked to that Convent of St. Mark, from whence had issued the first cry of liberty, the first resistance, and the first accusations against the tyranny of the Medici.

Another tablet, placed below that of Pico, is that of Politian.

POLITIANUS
IN HOC TUMULO IACET
ANGELUS UNUM
QUI CAPUT ET LINGUAS
RES NOVA TRES HABUIT
OBIIIT AN. MCCCCLXXXIV
SEP. XXIV—ÆTATIS

XL.

* The long hesitation led Savonarola to doubt, for a moment, of the salvation of his friend, from his showing a resistance to the voice of the Lord who called on him. But after having had a vision, in which he seemed to see him carried to heaven by angels, he felt assured that he was gone into purgatory, and told the people so from the pulpit. See the concluding part of the sixth sermon on Haggai.

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL CONDITION OF FLORENCE AFTER THE DEPARTURE OF THE FRENCH. — SAVONAROLA PROPOSES THE NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

[DECEMBER 1494.]

ACCORDING to ancient usage, Florence always changed its form of government by means of a *Parlamento*. The people were summoned by tolling the great bell of the Palazzo, and met, unarmed, in the Piazza before the Palazzo Vecchio, which was guarded by the armed attendants of the then existing Signory, who came down from their chamber to the *ringhiera** to ask for *Balia* for themselves and their friends. The *Balia* then became a kind of dictatorship, which might be held for months, or for years, renewable several times in succession, and it conferred the power of changing the Government. The people were summoned anew, to hold a *parlamento*; and being assembled under a pretended form of liberty, they always proved themselves a docile instrument in supporting the ambitious designs of the most powerful citizens; for they loudly applauded the proposals of the *Balia*, believing that they were showing their independence and liberty at the very moment they were destroying it. Hence the ancient Florentine proverb, *chi disse parlamento, disse guastamento* (who spoke of parliament, spoke of

* The *ringhiera* was at the front of the Palazzo, on the platform above the flight of steps, at one end of which is the pedestal of the *Marzocco*.

detriment). By the help of Balia and Parlamenti, the family of the Albizzi had long been able to hold the reins of government, and by the same processes the Medici established their tyrannical rule. Nevertheless—such is the force of habit—in this very year, no sooner had the French left the city than straightway, on the 2nd of December, the great bell of the Palazzo was tolled, to summon a Parlamento, the armed attendants of the Signory were placed at the entrances to the Piazza; and the people, proud of their importance, assembled as of old,* namely, each *Compagnia* headed by its *Gonfaloniere*. The Signory proposed that the people should proceed to nominate twenty *Accoppiatori*, with Balia and authority to choose a Signory and all the principal magistrates, for one year, and to select from among themselves a *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*.† The

* Parenti, *Storia di Firenze*, vol. i. p. 63.

† The *Lex Parlamenti anni Domini 1494, die vero 11 Decembris*, when treating of the *Accoppiatori*, says: ‘The which twenty, so elected, shall be held to be, and are *Accoppiatori* for one year next following. The which, for the said year, shall have authority to elect (*imborsare*) the Signory, the *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, and their Notary. And, for the present time, it is hereby provided, that the honourable citizen Francesco di Martino dello Scarfa, shall be the Magnificent *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, and shall be one of the five *Accoppiatori* of the Quarter of Santa Maria Novella, and shall act as secretary in the election of the rest, as hereinafter provided; and further, that none of the said elected *Accoppiatori* shall be disqualified from holding the office of *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*.’ This provision is taken from a miscellaneous imperfect volume. See in the Archivio delle Riformagioni, *Registro di Parlamento, o siano leggi del Consiglio Maggiore* (sic), 1452–97 (marked in the old arrangement cl. ii. 27). Rinuccini, in his *Ricordi Storici*, says: ‘The Signori took their places in the ringhiera, and there directed a petition to be read, which proposed, among other things, that the election of the *Otto di balia* should be (*a mano*), by open choice, for one time, and that the election to the three chief offices should also be conducted by the twenty *Accoppiatori* by open choice, for one year, and that the *Dicci di libertà e pace* should be elected for six months; and that the *Otto di guardia e balia* then in office, should be superseded.’ Nardi relates that: ‘Twenty citizens of the party of the reformers, by virtue of the law passed by the parlamento, were elected with the fullest authority, and balia of the whole Florentine people. Upon the consulation and authority of whom, for the space of one year, the principal magistrates may be elected; that is to say, the Signory, the Gonfa-

multitude, clamorous with joy, shouted assent, and in this way this new Government, called *The Twenty*, was created.

In ancient times, the government of the Florentine Republic consisted of a Gonfaloniere di Giustizia and eight *Priori*, who constituted the supreme magistracy, or the Signory, and were changed every two months. The ~~twelve~~ Gonfalonieri of the Companies, into which it was at one time the custom to enrol the citizens when armed, together with twelve *Buoni Uomini*, had no other duty than to sit with the Signory; the whole when united forming the *Collegio*; they were also designated the three greater Office-Bearers. After them came the *Dieci di Guerra*, elected every six months, and the *Otto*, whose chief duty was to try criminal and political offences, and who were elected every four months. Lastly, there were the two Councils or Assemblies of the *Comune* and of the *Popolo*, which were created when the city was divided into *Popolo*, properly so called, and *Potenti*, who arrogated to themselves the special privilege of forming the *Comune*. To those councils the

‘lonieri of the several companies of the people, and the twelve *Buoni Uomini*; the which magistrates are commonly called the three great office-bearers, and, when united, the *Collegio*, and thus the magistrates, hitherto called the *Dieci di guerra*, are called, with a better omen, the ‘*Dieci di libertà e pace*; and so also the magistracy of the *Otto di guardia e balia*.’ Vol. i. p. 60. It will be useful in this place to explain the meaning of the words *imborsare*, *tenere le borse serrate*, *tenere le borse aperte*, and such like, often met with in enactments and in histories. In the election of the magistrates, two *borse* (bags or purses), were provided, the one for the *Arte Maggiore*, the other for the *Arte Minore*. Into these bags were cast the names of those who might be chosen as magistrates, according to the drawing, or as it was called, the *squittinio* (scrutiny), and they were then said to be *imborsati* or *squittinati*. The election might be for six months, for a year, or even more. Every time that the magistrates were to be elected, the names were usually drawn from the bag by lot; this was said to be electing by a closed bag (*tenere le borse serrate*) but if after polling, power was given to have the magistrates chosen arbitrarily, then it was said to be electing by an open bag (*tenere le borse aperte*, *le borse a mano*); by which the names it was wished to select might be taken from the bag without drawing lots for them.

power of enacting the laws and the election of the magistrates were confided, so that in them were vested the most important functions of the general government.* When the Medici began to rule, they broke up all orders of the citizens, and brought all under their tyrannical sway. The two Councils of the *Comunes* and *Popoli* had no functions left to them, but their meetings were continued for appearance sake, as those princes had observed how much more the people were attached to the name than to the substance of liberty. Lorenzo the Magnificent, acting on this policy, had always the meetings held, but he at the same time created a new Council, which he called the *Seventy*, which was composed of his partisans. He transferred to it all the authority of the old Councils, and particularly the election of the magistrates, by which means he got the whole power of the Republic into his own hands.†

The *Parlamento* being assembled, re-instituted all the old magistrates, abolishing only the Council of *Seventy*, whose whole authority became vested in the *twenty Accoppiatori*; so that they only changed the persons and the names rather than the form itself of the government. It appeared to the people, as it had done to the Medici, and as it then appeared to everyone, that whoever elected the *Signory* were in possession of the *Balia*, and of the whole power of the government. In truth, the duties of the magistrates were not well defined, so that each believed himself to be omnipotent; whilst the *Signory* were so in reality. The administration

* For these particulars on the government of the Florentine Republic, see Giannotti, Guicciardini, vol. ii. of the *Opere Inedite*; the *Histories of Villani, Ammirato &c.*; but especially the *Statuti* and *Provisioni*, which can alone give an exact account of this subject; one very little inquired into.

† The Marchese Gino Capponi has published the law by which the Magnificent instituted this council, and by some admirable observations accompanying it, has made us quite understand how important this tyrannical body had been for Lorenzo's object.—*Archivio Storico*, i. p. 321.

of the state was in their hands; they sat in judgement on lawsuits; they could dispose of life and property; sometimes they sent embassies, and declared war, and they passed new laws: in short, while the statutes gave them much power, whatever these did not give they contrived to obtain by extraordinary means.* Nor was there any way of curbing their unlimited power, except by displacing them at the end of every two months; hence the being a member of the Signory had become a place of less power than that of the elector, because every magistrate, at the end of two months was obliged to surrender his authority, whereas those who elected him might continue for years in possession of power.† This the Magnificent skilfully kept to himself, by means of his Council of Seventy, and the people thought to maintain their power by means of the Twenty.

But when the machine was set to work, it was seen that things took a very different turn from that which was intended. The Republic got into the hands of the Accoppiatori, and the machinery stood still: they had nominally, authority over all, but they found that they were not masters of any. The Medici, the Albizzi, and other powerful families, surrounded by friends possessed of great wealth, and having imposing names, could, by such means, rule the city; but what could twenty citizens do, differing in their views, in their conditions of life, and in their dispositions, and many of them wholly inexperienced in state affairs? In spite of their authority, they found that they had neither the capacity nor the power to govern: the chief source of their weakness being the difficulty of agreeing among themselves. They had very soon experience of this, in proceeding to the election

* Guicciardini discusses the subject admirably in his *Reggimento di Firenze*, see p. 282, and following.

† Guicciardini, *ibidem*; Giannotti, *Della Repubblica Fiorentina*.

of the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, whom it belonged to them to choose; as they could not agree upon any one who had more than three votes, they were obliged, in this important duty, to decide upon him who had most opinions in his favour, although the number did not amount to that which the law required.*

In this way, the old usages of the Parlamento brought back the old disorders; and they had scarcely entered upon their new government when all began to think of a change. Every one saw that it was a vain hope to expect to resuscitate the Republic, and leave intact those old institutions from which the Medici had eradicated every remnant of life left in them; everyone saw that a lifeless body had been handed over to the Accoppiatori, into which it was vain to expect that they would be able to infuse a vital spark. People then began to think of a total change in the form of government, of a reconstruction of the body politic; but when they came to the task, they found that to provide an effective substitute was more difficult in proportion to its being more needed; on all sides numerous and unexpected obstacles presented themselves.

The rebellion of Pisa had become every day more serious; in that city danger had established concord; a government had been rapidly formed; men, arms, and money had been collected; and the citizens were animated by an ardent desire of liberty and independence. The rest of the Florentine territory was in a very unsettled condition; Arezzo and Montepulciano, encouraged by the example of Pisa, and by funds and council from Siena, had rebelled; and other boroughs or towns were preparing to do the same; while in Florence there was an urgent call for money to support three wars and to pay the sums promised to the King of France, who was eager to be paid in advance. It was

* Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*.

necessary to raise recruits, to arm the peasantry, to find officers, to impose new and heavy taxes on a people overloaded with them. To do all this required a strong and united Government; instead of which, that which existed was weak and disunited, and some change was urgently demanded.

Besides all this, the citizens, in the last sixty years, had lost their ancient and marvellous aptitude for framing new laws and new institutions; and finding themselves on a sudden free, and their own masters, they were lost and confused by their very liberty. There was no order of patricians, who, as in the time of the Albizzi, could take the direction of public affairs. The wealthy citizens, under the Medici, had no other privilege allowed them beyond that of being permitted to enjoy their riches: in that enjoyment, and with some public employment, obtained by favour, they passed their lives without acquiring any experience or familiarity or taste for public affairs. The humbler classes were entirely set aside. The ancient chiefs of the guilds, the *Capitadini*, as they were called, who, at one time had been the centres of industrial and public life, in whose warehouses had been amassed those extraordinary riches which had supported the country in long and difficult wars, and which had been the political arena where the brave citizens, contending with each other, were trained, who had not only given good council to the Republic but courageously served it—those ancient *Capitadini* existed now only in name; the people survived, but in a state of perplexity and disunion. The task, therefore, of organising a new Government was an extremely difficult one, not only on account of the burden of the wars, but because the old institutions had lost their vitality, the people all political experience, and so entirely had everything changed, that not one of the old forms of government was adapted to the new state of affairs.

The people were not only without the necessary disposition, but men could not be found who were capable of undertaking the weighty and difficult task of framing a constitution. We have seen Francesco Valori rising up from among a tumultuary mob, to lead them on to expel the Medici; but although he was incomparably well fitted to act in the Piazza, he had not the qualifications for the Palazzo; for, when there, he could with difficulty restrain the impetuosity of his excited passions. We have seen Piero Capponi render himself immortal in the very face of the King and generals of France; but he, too, was impatient of long debates in Council. When it was necessary to put an end to a discussion by grasping the hilt of his sword, that was the moment for him; but to discuss, to contend in talk, to enter into long arguments, with his cloak on his back and his cap on his head, was an annoyance he could not endure. He was far more at ease in his cuirass, exposed to the sun's rays, to rain, and the enemies' balls; in truth, he asked for no better employment than to be sent to the camp at Pisa and begin the war.

In such a time of dire necessity, no one knew on whom to place any hope; nor was it natural to expect that even the occasion would give birth to new men; for, during the sixty years that had been passed under a tyrannical power, no one had been educated for liberty, and all had lost that familiarity with public affairs which is an indispensable preparation for anyone who would attempt to re-organise and give a new form to a government for a whole people. But as there always arises a compensation for every evil, there then began to be formed in Florence that school of Italian politicians, which, at a later period, produced Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini, and Donato Giannotti, then only entering the early days of their youth, at the time when their country was returning to a state of freedom.

There existed in the breasts of the Florentines such an innate love of liberty, that when unable to enter freely into discussions in the councils, they retired to their closets to reason on affairs of state, and to create political science. In consulting their works, we always find they begin by laying down this dogma—that the greatest felicity which man can hope to find on earth is to have a share in the government of his country; and if, by the existence of a tyranny, he is deprived of that felicity, nothing is left but to seek for happiness in study, to wait for better times, and to prepare lessons of experience for the benefit of posterity. But the rise of that science was not sufficient to relieve the Republic from the load of evils that weighed upon it. Not only had no man of that school yet appeared of such eminence as to command an influence over the people, but politicians educated in the solitude of their libraries, of scanty experience in the management of business, and unknown to the multitude, were certainly not likely to rise to any importance in such troubled times, when a strong power could alone prevail. The revolutions which had taken place, however, gave a new impulse to their ideas, and afforded an opportunity of diffusing them more widely among the people; it is therefore important that we should show what these ideas were.

The study of politics is now founded on general principles; in the governments we ought to expect an equal distribution of power, a pure administration of justice, entire independence of the magistrates, and the greatest possible amount of individual freedom. The political science of the Italians of that day amounted to no more than the study and analysis of the human passions. Starting from the one idea, that to govern is the greatest felicity, that which man most desires, it naturally follows that all would aspire to it, that all would be desirous to hold the reins of government in their native land, and

that every man would strive to attain this, however it might injure other men. Such principles must constantly give rise to the danger of relapsing into tyranny, as happened in almost all the governments of Italy. To the question—what is a perfect government? The whole school of Italian politicians had but one answer—that in which no tyranny can exist. And what is the form of government in which tyranny cannot exist? That which shall be so regulated as to satisfy, at one and the same time, all the passions of all orders of the citizens. In every city, they said, there will be a few who will try to rule over all; the *ottimati* (patricians) will strive for honours, the people for liberty.* Hence, they desired to have a mixed government, uniting in itself the various interests of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, so as to satisfy the passions of the ambitious, of the *ottimati*, and of the people; and, by such means, they hoped that secure liberty would be established.

Turning from theory to practice, the eyes of the Florentine politicians were constantly directed to Venice. Of all the Italian governments, that was the only one which had survived the general ruin; the only one which had increased in firmness, in power, and in honour; and in which no tyrant had been able to establish himself. Hence the desire of Florence, and of all the exhausted Italian republics, was, to be revived in the form of that of Venice, which seemed the most perfect of all governments. When the people of Florence reflected upon the interminable series of changes they had gone through, contrasted with the long and solemn repose of the Venetian lagunes, they experienced the same kind of

* This theory is minutely unfolded by Giannotti, and forms the basis, the very foundation, of his political writings; it is to be found also in Machiavelli and in Guicciardini (*Del Reggimento di Firenze*); but it occurs much more commonly in the writings and discourses of the contemporaries of Savonarola. See his own *Trattato sul Reggimento di Firenze*.

feeling as that which is felt in comparing the political state of France with that of England. But in the desire the Florentines then had to transfer to Florence the form of government established in Venice, they met with the same difficulties as the French would encounter, were they to wish to adopt the English constitution. The Venetians, from the most remote times, had a strong and powerful aristocracy, an order of men never known in Florence, and where the Medici had thoroughly eradicated that slight difference which originally had existed among the various orders of the citizens, and had so reduced everything to one level that no one now saw the least possibility of any other form of government being established than either an absolute tyranny or the government of the mob. Nevertheless, there was an anxious desire to find out some mode of introducing the Venetian form of government into Florence; some would have it on a broader basis, some, on the other hand, would restrict it, but the diversity of opinions did not go farther. Such were the views entertained by the politicians, and such was the tenour of all conversations in the streets and in all places of public resort in Florence.

But the Republic, while thus reasoning in the abstract and discoursing in the market-place, was like a ship drifting without a pilot until some one in the Palazzo should get up and propose a distinct course of action, advise it, recommend it to others, and most particularly to the Accoppiatori, without whose consent it was now difficult to make any change. In this state of things, when the men of science had little experience, the men of action but a small share of prudence or ability, attention was directed to another class of citizens, the lawyers; in whose hands fortune is apt to place the helm of the state, at a time when the destinies of a people are pending between tyranny and liberty. Having much to do in the common business of life, and having made laws

their study and profession, they are supposed to have that acquaintance with human affairs, that special knowledge requisite to decide difficult questions which arise when a form of government is about to be changed ; nor have long and sad experience been sufficient to convince us that lawyers have never succeeded in settling the constitution of any nation on a firm foundation.

However, be that as it may, after much fluctuation of opinions in the Councils at the Palazzo, those of two doctors learned in the law carried most weight ; these were Guido Antonio Vespucci and Paolo Antonio Soderini. The latter belonged to the popular party, had been long ambassador at Venice, and had had a better opportunity than any other man of becoming acquainted with their form of government. He proposed that the Councils of the *Comune* and the *Popolo* should be abolished, substituting for them a Great Council, similar to the Grand Council of Venice, to be composed of the people, with power to elect the magistrates and pass the laws ; together with a smaller Council, composed of the *ottimati* or men of greater experience, where like the Council of the *Pregati*, such subjects might be deliberated upon as could not well be discussed in public. He also proposed to abolish the *Accoppiatori* at once, but to continue the Signory, the *Otto*, the *Dieci*, and the *Gonfalonieri di Compagnia*. There was no difference of opinion respecting the second part of his proposal ; but there was much division as to the formation of the Councils, especially of the greater one, the *ottimati* being the chief opponents to it, supported by Vespucci. He dwelt much on the incapacity of the multitude for such matters, and on their liability to run into excesses ; he brought forward many of the sad scenes that Florence had passed through in the course of its history ; he urged that the Grand Council of Venice was composed of gentlemen, and not of the

humbler classes, and that even these last were a more grave, quiet, and moderate people than those of Florence, whose minds were more subtle, their fancies more lively, and their passions less restrained. To all this it was replied, that what was required to make a gentleman in Venice made a citizen in Florence; for in the latter, the lower orders had not the right of citizenship; that there being no order of nobility in Florence, a government in the hands of a limited class would come to be the tyranny of a few; and, besides, that it would be unjust to exclude the people from a share in the government, as it was mainly through them that the Medici had been expelled, and that liberty had been recovered.* Although the opinion of Soderini was received with much favour, not only by the people but by the wisest men in the city, that of Vespucci had a majority in the Council at the Palazzo. There were among them many secret partisans of the Medici, as well as the twenty Accoppiatori, who, being threatened by Soderini's proposal with the loss of their office, endeavoured to get the new form of government so constituted that the chief power might remain in their hands. The supporters of Vespucci could not, however, conceal from themselves that a government restricted to a small body would very much displease the people, and all those excluded from any share in it; and that it would be likely to create new disturbances, which would end either in uncontrolled liberty, or in a violent re-establishment of the Medici.†

The discussions in the Palazzo on those proposals seemed endless, and the Council continued to sit

* The two speeches of Soderini and Vespucci are specially noticed by Guicciardini in his *Storia d'Italia*.

† This is the opinion of all the historians of the time, and especially of Guicciardini in his *Reggimento di Firenze*, and in his *Storia Inedita di Firenze*.

far on in the night.* The question having fallen into the hands of the lawyers, who were vain of the importance given them, was not likely to be soon brought to a conclusion; they spoke, they disputed, they talked, when the time had come for action; when there was imminent danger of war; when many towns in the dominion were threatening rebellion; and when the whole nation was becoming wearied out by a long state of suspense as to their future fate, and might fly to arms, and run into sanguinary violence. Many, therefore, were in a state of great alarm, many in such a state of bewilderment that they knew not what to say or what to do. If divines could not help them, because their learning was not of this world; if men fitted for action were deficient in a knowledge of public business and were untrained in the cause of liberty, still less could learned lawyers be of use, for from them could only be obtained fallacious doctrines and fallacious experience. Nothing but good sense, a true love of justice, and an earnest determination to carry that out, could be relied upon, to save the people in their present state of confusion. And, assuredly, the greatest lesson that history can give to man is that which is set before him, in those dreadful times—when the world seems about to become the prey of the most daring, and chaos threatens to revisit the earth, when science is vain, when governments are helpless, when riches, honours, and even courage are trampled upon by the unbridled audacity of the mob, and when virtue, a generous conduct, the holy love of what is good, can alone save a people. The man, therefore, who was destined to save the people of Florence, was the friar Girolamo Savonarola; the hour had struck when he was to enter into public life; events had carried him forward irresistibly

* ‘They had very long disputes among themselves, which lasted often until five or six in the morning.’—Burlamacchi, p. 67.

in that direction, notwithstanding the firmness with which he had hitherto held back.

In the history of the Florentine Republic instances are not unfrequent of religious men taking part in politics, even instances of female saints, such as the famous Saint Catherine of Siena; but Savonarola was so entirely absorbed by his religious feelings that he had always wished to keep himself free from them. But now that the inevitable course of events had become far stronger than human will, and he saw, in that unsettled state of things, a people languishing in idleness and misery; although his heart told him that charity breaks through all laws, the hard struggle still continued within him. In composing new sermons on subjects he had formerly treated, new ideas necessarily suggested themselves from the altered circumstances in which he stood. ‘Give up your pomps and vanities,’ he said, ‘sell all your superfluities and give the money to the poor. I beseech you, my good citizens, to collect alms in all the churches for the poor of the city and of the country; apply, at least for a year, the money which any of you would spend at the University of Pisa;* and, if that be not enough, take the plate and ornaments of the churches, and in doing so I will be the first to help you. But above everything,’ he added, ‘come to some determination by which the shops may be opened and employment be found for the idle people in the streets.’† On another occasion, he said that the Lord would renovate everything, and continually kept repeating, ‘Let us sing a new song unto the Lord,’ words which he thus applied:—‘The Lord

* The university of Pisa, established by Lorenzo de’ Medici, was then closed on account of the revolution, and thus its revenues might be otherwise applied. They could not have been applied to any better purpose at that time than in the relief of the poor.

† Seventh sermon on Haggai.

desires that everything be made anew, that all the past be destroyed, that no evil habit remain, no bad laws, no bad government.' But then, as if he had wandered too far, he returned to their religious obligations, saying:—'This is a time when words must give way to deeds, vain ceremonies to true sentiments. The Lord said—I was in hunger and ye gave me no meat, I was naked and ye clothed me not. He has told you before now that you ought not to build fine churches and fine convents, and now he tells you of works of charity; it is by charity then that all things must be renovated.'* From all this it is evident that during the time Savonarola was preaching his first sermons on Haggai, he was still hesitating, still in a state of uncertainty.

But as the popular wave became still more agitated, his sermons became less restricted to religious views, and he was forced forward by the violence of that wave to become a citizen. He saw before him a whole people in a state of confusion and desolation, who had need of help, and who had turned to him a look of confidence. He saw the vanity of science, the incapacity of the cautious, the sadness of the majority, while his own good sense, his own strong will, his sincere love of what was just and right, clearly pointed out to him the course that ought to be taken. He rose even greater than himself; it seemed to him that he had power to unite discordant wills, to direct them to religion and to liberty; he felt that he had power to infuse the love he himself was conscious of, his own soul, into the minds of the whole people: 'O Florence,' he then exclaimed, 'if I could lay open all my thoughts to you, then would you see a new and compressed vessel, filled, as it were, with boiling must, unable to burst forth.'†

* Eighth sermon on Haggai.

† Thirteenth sermon on Haggai.

He uttered these words on December 12, the third Sunday in Advent, and on that same day he delivered a more decidedly political discourse. He began by unfolding a theory then much disseminated in the schools, that the government of one is the best, when there is a good prince; and the worst when there is a bad one, as he is stronger and acts with unity of purpose for good or for evil; and is thus an image of the government of God over nature, in which unity is found in all things.* This was the language of the school, and this was the opening of the discourse with which he made his first entrance into political life. But, as he proceeded, his good sense soon brought him out of the old formalism. 'Those principles,' he continued, 'ought, however, to be adapted to the nature of the people to whom we mean to apply them. For the people of the North, who have much strength and a moderate degree of mind, and for the people of the South, who have much mind and moderate strength, the government of one may sometimes be best; but in Italy, and especially in Florence, where both strength and intellect abound, where the people are subtle in mind and restless in spirit, the government of one must become tyrannical. The only form of government that is adapted for us is a civil and general one. Woe to thee, O Florence, if thou place at thy head one who can rule supremely over thee. With chiefs such as these, cities must be ruined by all possible evils. Tyrant is the name of one who leads a wicked life, more wicked than all others, an usurper of others' rights, a destroyer of his own soul and of that of the people.

* These ideas are fully developed in the treatise *De Regimine Principum*, and were held by the Florentine politicians in the time of Savonarola. Ficino had adopted them, and some traces of them are discoverable in Guicciardini (See his *Dialogo sul Reggimento di Firenze*). Savonarola afterwards dwells more particularly upon them in his *Trattato circa il Reggimento di Firenze*.

Therefore, the first law you ought to make should be this, that no one person shall ever have a right to place himself at the head of your city, otherwise you will build upon a bed of sand. Such men seek to rise above others, and know not to maintain civil equality; they are the worst of all, they seek the ruin of their own souls and of those of the people.’*

‘O, my people, you know that I have never willingly meddled with the affairs of state, and do you believe that I should do so now, were it not that I see in them a necessity for me to look to the salvation of your souls? You are not willing to believe it, but you have seen that my words have come true, that they did not proceed from my own will, but came from the Lord. Listen, then, to one who is seeking only your salvation. Purify your minds, attend to the common weal, forget your private interests; and if, by such a course, you reform your city, it will be rendered more glorious than it has ever yet been. And you, the people of Florence, will, in this way, commence the reform of all Italy, and will spread your wings over the world, bringing reformation to all nations. Remember that the Lord has shown clear signs, that He desires a renovation of all things, and that you are the people who have been elected to begin this great work; but you must obey the commands of Him who calls and invites you to turn to a spiritual life. Open, O Lord, the hearts of this people, that they may know the things that are in me, and which thou hast revealed and commanded.’

‘Your reform must begin with things spiritual, which are superior to all that are material, which constitute the rule of life, and are life itself; and all that is temporal ought to be subservient to morals and to religion,

* Some of the same sentiments he has expressed in other sermons, preached in the same Advent; as, for example, the 8th.

on which it depends. And if you have heard it said that *States are not to be governed with paternosters*,* remember that that is the rule of tyrants, the rule of men who are enemies of God, and of the common weal; the rule for oppressing and not for elevating a city, and rendering it free. If you wish to have a good Government, it must be derived from God. I certainly would not concern myself with the affairs of state, were it not for that end.'

'So soon, therefore, as you shall have purified your minds, laid aside all evil designs, condemned gambling, profligacy and blaspheming, then you may apply your hands to construct a Government; to make a first draft of one, to be afterwards corrected and carried out in details. For such a model and substance of a new Government, this ought to be the ground-work, *that no individual shall have any benefit but what is general, and the people alone must have the power of choosing the magistrates, and of approving the laws.* A Great Council is the best form of Government for this city, one similar to that in Venice. I recommend, therefore, that the people be assembled under their sixteen Gonfalonieri, and that each of the sixteen divisions should propose a form; that the Gonfalonieri should select four from these sixteen forms; to be delivered to the Signory; who, after offering up a prayer, should choose that which shall appear to them to be the best. And of this you may rest assured, that a form of Government so chosen by the people must come from God. I am of opinion that that of Venice should be the one chosen, and you need in no degree be ashamed to imitate it, for they

* It was a well known saying of the elder Cosmo de' Medici; who was also accustomed to say, that two ells of *panno rosato*¹ are sufficient to make a respectable man.

¹ *Panno rosato* was rose-coloured woollen cloth, of which the official dress of the magistrates was made.—TR.

received it from God, from whom every good thing comes. You may have seen that ever since that Government existed in Venice there has been no strife or dissension of any kind; it is irresistible, therefore, to believe that it is in accordance with the will of God.*

After this discourse, Savonarola said a few words respecting some particular provisions, not less necessary to be made without delay. One of these was a reorganization of the taxes, which not only oppressed the humbler classes to an incredible degree, but, while complained of by all as extremely heavy, at the same time left the state in great financial embarrassment. He likewise proposed, that while all the offices of importance should be filled up by nomination and election, the minor ones should be by lot, as an encouragement that all might have a share in the Government. He concluded by recommending that public prayers should be offered up, and that there should be a general reconciliation between the citizens of the old and of the new Government.†

In sermons that he had previously delivered he had endeavoured to instil the same ideas gradually into the minds of the people, but on and after the 12th of December he distinctly inculcated them; and, with a degree of discrimination that excited the general surprise of his auditors; for, when they considered the life he had led, and the nature of his studies, no one imagined that he could have entered so minutely into state affairs. And so wise and prudent did those discourses appear, that he was frequently consulted by the Signory, both at St. Mark's and in the Palazzo, where

* See the whole of the thirteenth sermon. In the preceding discourses he had entered, to a certain extent, on political matters, but in the thirteenth he takes up the subject expressly, discussing it minutely in all its parts.

† Sermon xiii.

he even did not refuse to preach.* But, in the end, he expressed a desire that there should be a meeting in the Duomo of all the magistrates and people, excepting the women and children; and there he delivered a sermon in which he made the four following propositions:—

First, that they should in all things have the fear of God before them, and that there should be a reform of manners.

Secondly, that the formation of a popular Government, for the benefit of all, should precede all considerations of private utility.

Thirdly, that there should be a general peace, absolving the friends of the late Government from all blame: remitting also, in their case, all penalties; and showing indulgence to all who were indebted to the state.

Fourthly, the establishment of a general Government, which should include all citizens who, according to the ancient statutes, formed a part of the state.† And he recommended the Grand Council of Venice as the best form they could adopt; modifying it to suit the particular character of the Florentine people.‡

* Burlamacchi; Violi, as quoted by Barsanti (p. 86), says in his 11th Giornata: 'When the form of the new Government was under consideration, he (Savonarola) and several other friars (of St. Mark) were consulted as to what plan of government would be most appropriate for the city, in order to preserve the liberty that had recently been recovered; and the opinion of friar Jerome was approved, that there should be a general government of all the citizens, rather than that of a few or of one chief, for the future peace of the city and its inhabitants; and that form was adopted as the best.'

† We shall see that this number was not too great, but rather too limited.

‡ In the twenty-ninth sermon on Job, Savonarola enters into a minute detail of the contents of the above sermon, which has not been printed. Nardi discusses the subject at great length, and observes: 'It was a common belief, at that time, that this man knew little of active life, but was occupied with discoursing on moral subjects, and still more on true and Christian philosophy. And with regard to those doctrines, if they had been rightly listened to, there can be no doubt that he would have disposed the minds of our citizens for the reception of a good and holy form of government. The which things, however, after having been

These recommendations, given from the pulpit of Santa Maria del Fiore, by a friar, by Savonarola, at a time when his prophecies had been fulfilled, produced a very powerful effect, and decided the victory in favour of the popular party. It is the unanimous opinion of all the historians that, without those sermons, the proposal of Vespucci would have been carried in the Palazzo, and that the government would have been thrown into the hands of the patricians, which would have given rise to fresh disorders, and to other revolutions.* But when the voice of the friar thundered forth in favour of liberty, nothing could resist it. The people who, up to this time, had been in a state of uncertainty, not knowing which party to rely upon, and wholly unacquainted with the very language of political discussions, now saw their way clearly before them; they would have nothing but *the Grand Council, after the manner of the Venetians*; and shouted that throughout the city.

‘preached, and on many occasions strongly urged, were at last taken up, and deliberated upon, after being subjected to many difficulties and contradictions.’—See pp. 58, 60, Firenze, 1857.

* ‘That proposal, which implied a limited governing body, would have been carried in the council, where there was only a small number of the citizens, if, amidst the deliberations of men, there had not been mingled a divine authority, by the mouth of Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara, a friar of the Order of Preachers; he at that time having publicly declared his detestation of a form emanating from a Parlamento, affirmed it to be the will of God, that they ought to organise a decidedly popular Government, in which it should not be in the power of a few citizens to alter either the security or the liberty of the rest; and thus, when their reverence for so great a name was united with the wishes of the many, those who were of a different mind could not resist so prevalent an opinion.’—Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, lib. ii. p. 165, ediz. di Rosini. Guicciardini, in that history, could not freely express all his sentiments regarding Savonarola, because he wrote at a time that was very unfavourable to the friar’s memory. But in his *Storia Inedita di Firenze*, which perhaps he did not intend should be published, may be seen the very different estimate he had formed of Savonarola as a politician. He there says that Savonarola did not treat of political matters or general principles only, but went into details; and showed that he had been born and had lived as one fit to govern a state: he says, moreover, that by his boldness and his moderation he had saved the new Government from the danger of ruin in its birth.

The divine authority, which Savonarola associated with politics had a very considerable effect in Florence, where the Republic had always been under the special protection of saints; and where religion and the state were always united in defence of their liberty. It was certainly something marvellous to see a friar discoursing on politics from the pulpit; and the marvel had no small influence in increasing his authority. And indeed when we read the history of that time, and what, at a later period, Giannotti, Guicciardini, and Machiavelli wrote respecting the Government then established, one would be almost disposed to say, that a miracle had then been worked, contrary to all experience of the things of this world, thus confounding the wise, to save the country and found a new republic; were it not that the extraordinary event is to be explained, as we have said, by reflecting, that in those awful moments, in which the whole frame of society and all that holds it together are falling to pieces, there is one power which will always be able to prevent it—that ingenuous spotless power to be found in men truly great; the fervid, earnest aspiration after truth, the firm and tenacious adherence to what is good; all which existed to overflowing in Savonarola, and constituted the very essence of his generous character. In the hour of trial, what learning can bear comparison with a wisdom such as that? what victories, what conquests, can with justice be said to be equal to those gained by the power of that love?

And can it now be necessary to enter upon a defence of Savonarola for having entered the field of politics? Must we repeat that he wished for liberty in order to secure the triumph of religion? Must we call in aid the examples and the authority of other ecclesiastics and friars who have done the like? We will rather maintain that he did not become a politician by choice, but, as we have shown, that he was irresistibly dragged

into that course by the march of events. We will further observe, that there is no custom, nor law, nor vow, but must give way before the law of nature; before that vow which every honest man makes in his own breast,—to strive after what is just and good, under every form, in all times, and in every condition.

But without dwelling further on such reflections, we now see that the decision had been taken; and many and inevitable consequences followed. Savonarola found himself all at once at the head of the whole city, and no time was to be lost in organising the new Government, if he wished to prevent his many enemies from obtaining a victory over him. Piero de' Medici had already gone to the French camp at Naples, where he had been well received by Charles, who so unworthily styled himself *the Protector of Florentine liberty*. A tyrant was then ready to return to Florence on any change of fortune that might happen. It was most necessary, therefore, that all should labour as one man, to carry on and complete the constitution of the popular Government; to make it united, firm, powerful, and respected; unless they wished to become the victims of a new tyranny. We shall see with what prudence and foresight Savonarola continued to give his advice on all the fundamental laws of the new state; and how his spirit so animated and pervaded the whole people, that everyone might be said to have adopted the same ideas and to speak the same language.

CHAPTER V.

FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT BY THE COOPERATION OF SAVONAROLA—CONSTITUTION OF THE CONSIGLIO MAGGIORE AND OF THE CONSIGLIO DEGLI OTTANTA—NEW PLAN OF TAXATION, SUBSTITUTING FOR ALL OTHERS A TEN PER CENT. TAX ON INCOME FROM PROPERTY—DISCUSSION ON A LAW PASSED FOR A GENERAL PACIFICATION; AND ON AN APPEAL FROM THE SEI FAVE, OR FROM THE OTTO TO THE CONSIGLIO MAGGIORE—THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TRIBUNAL OF THE MERCATANZIA OR OF COMMERCE—THE ACCOPPIATORI LAY DOWN THEIR OFFICE—PARLAMENTI ABOLISHED—FOUNDATION OF THE MONTE DELLA PIETA—OPINION OF ITALIAN POLITICAL WRITERS ON THE REFORMS INTRODUCED BY SAVONAROLA.

[1495.]

THE political importance of Savonarola's views cannot be seen in its true light unless we follow, step by step, the formation of the new Government, and, at the same time, read the sermons which he preached while it was in progress. When we observe that all the new laws he brought forward were preceded by one or more of his sermons, in which he explained and recommended them to the people, and if we imagine ourselves present at the *Pratiche** of the Signory in the Palazzo, and hear

* When the Signory, with the Collegi, the other magistrates and some of the citizens invited to be present (who were then designated the *Arroti*) assembled as a deliberative council, they were said to hold a *Pratica*. After 1494, the word also denoted a meeting held with other magistrates and the Consiglio degli Ottanta: and in the *Libri di Pratiche* of that time, the speeches of the members present are more or less partially recorded.

the citizens discussing the proposed laws in the very language of the friar, and bringing forward his arguments in his own words, almost tempting us to believe that their speeches had been copied from his sermons, and that the laws they were discussing were only some new epistle of his writing, we shall then be able to perceive how one man had become the soul of a whole people. When we have considered all this, and have taken into account the number of the new laws, and have constructed, as it were, the whole plan of the Government, we shall find it admirable in all its parts, and stupendous as a whole; and when we find also that all the greatest historians and political writers of Italy have declared it to be the best, or rather the only good form of government that Florence had enjoyed through its long and much disturbed history; we shall then be in a situation to form a right judgement of Savonarola.

The sermons which he preached in the Duomo while the citizens were engaged in the Palazzo in forming the new constitution for the Republic, are those on Haggai, in Advent of that year, to which are to be added eight on some of the Psalms, preached on the festivals following Advent. Their chief importance is entirely political, although they are never without a religious character, because political reform was only a small part of the general reform contemplated by the preacher; and he viewed the new Government in no other light than as the first step in the regeneration of morals and the Church. He therefore never omitted in his discourses to dwell on morality and true religion; which the political parts constantly suggested. The sermons to which we now refer are not more remarkable than others in point of eloquence, but they are certainly valuable beyond all the rest in respect of the history of the time, and of the biography of their author. If his other sermons make us acquainted with his goodness

and the vast extent of his biblical learning, these reveal to us a new phase in his genius, and make manifest to us the great powers of his mind. We are presented with a treatise on the new Government; we trace the living history of its formation, and from it we are able to construct the whole political history of the Florentine Republic in those days..

We have already seen that, on December 12, Savonarola directed his discourse especially to politics, and the new principles which he recommended. We find that on the 22nd and 23rd of the same month a new law, of the highest importance, was passed in entire conformity with the sentiments of the friar; and which passed with the fullest approbation in the Councils of the Comuni and Popoli. As that law, or as it was then called *provisione*, formed the basis of the new Government, we shall give a detailed account of it. It constituted the *Consiglio Maggiore*, conferring upon it the power to appoint all the principal magistrates, to confirm all the laws; in other words, making it the sovereign power of the State. All were eligible for that Council without exception, provided they were twenty-nine years of age and *beneficiati** citizens, which meant, according to an old law, those who had been *veduti* or *seduti* in the three great magisterial offices, or had derived their

* This word is explained by Pitti in his *Apologia dei Cappucci* (p. 277), published in the *Archivio Storico*, vol. iv. part 2. 'Because, as you know, we have three descriptions of citizens; the *Aggravazzati*, *Statuali*, and *Benefiziati*. Of these three the *benefiziati* are alone eligible for the *Consiglio Grande*. The *statuali* are eligible for all the magisterial offices, both in the city and beyond it, according to the *borse* in which their names are deposited for drawing at the general elections, and according to the respective qualifications of each; and so soon as any of them is chosen to one of the three higher magisterial offices, he acquires the *benefizio*, and becomes eligible for the *Consiglio Grande*. The *aggravazzati* (that is, the tax payers) do not, as such, become eligible as magistrates, but have only the privilege of bearing arms, of being exempt from certain duties (*gabelle*), have some other immunities, and rank as true citizens. The remainder, the artificers inhabiting the city, belong to the *plebs*, and are not admissible to offices in the Republic.'

benefizio from their father, grandfather, or great grandfather.* It is unimportant to inquire into the origin or object of that ancient law, it is sufficient to observe that instead of all the citizens being eligible for the Consilio Maggiore (as some would have us believe, who charge the new Government as being too democratic) it was only the *benefiziati* who could belong to it. And when the number of those exceeded 1,500 the law provided that they should be *sterzati*, that is, separated into three divisions, each of which should, in succession, constitute the Consiglio Maggiore for six months. By the result of the first election, it was found that while the population of Florence amounted to about 90,000 † inhabitants, there were only 3,200 ‡ *benefiziati* who had the requisite qualification, so that the Consiglio for a period of eighteen months did not consist of more than 1,000 persons at any one time.§ No meeting was to be

* Giannotti, *Della Repubblica*, lib. ii. c. vii. pp. 113-14 (of the valuable edition by Polidori) in treating of the office of the *Collegi* or *Gonfalonieri di Compagnia*, states:—‘ Its reputation had greatly increased, ‘ when, on account of few being found remaining in the city, to perform ‘ the duties of the magistracy, because of the plague, a law was passed ‘ (affecting those who had so absented themselves) depriving all of the ‘ privilege of being eligible to the magistracy whose grandfather had ‘ not been either *veduto* or *seduto* in one of the three great offices.’ And describing the evil consequences of that law, and the increase of power it had given to the Medici, he says: ‘ Because every citizen had recourse ‘ to them to obtain one of the higher magisterial offices, and they ‘ not only sought to be nominated and drawn (*imborsati e tratti*) themselves, but if they had sons, even though infants in swaddling clothes, ‘ they tried to have their names drawn, so that if they could not obtain the ‘ privilege of *seduto*, they might at all events have that of *veduto*.’ From this it appears that a *seduto* really became a magistrate, while a *veduto* had only the name of one. In choosing the magistrates, they often drew one who was to have the office, and another who was to be no more than a *veduto*.

† Zuccagni Orlandini, *Statistica della Toscana*.

‡ Rinuccini, *Ricordi Storici*, p. 146.

§ Pitti, in his *Apologia di Cappucci* protests against the charge of there being a democratic preponderance, and Guicciardini goes into the question at some length in his *Reggimento di Firenze*, and in his *Storia Inedita di Firenze*. So also does Nardi, and that not only in his *Storia*, but even more fully in his unpublished *Discorsi*, which are in the Riccardi library.

held legal unless two-thirds of the members were present. In order to give encouragement to young men, and to excite all to lead a virtuous life, the law further provided, that every three years sixty citizens, not *benefiziati*, and twenty-four young men of twenty-four years of age, should be admitted into the Consiglio Maggiore. It was further provided, that on and after January 15, following, eighty citizens not under forty years of age should be elected to form a separate Council, to be called the *Consiglio degli Ottanta*, to be renewed every six months. They were to be the regular assessors of the Signory, who were required to consult them once at least in every week; and to them, together with the Collegi and the other magistrates, were confided the appointment of ambassadors and commanding officers, the raising of levies, and other important matters which could not be properly decided upon by a public body.

In this way the foundation of the new Government was laid; the Consiglio degli Ottanta and the Consiglio Maggiore resembling a senate and a house of representatives. When a law had to be passed, the Proposto (president), who was one of the Signori, and was changed every third day, and sometimes oftener, laid it before the Signory; and if approved by them and the Collegi, they, in the event of its being a law of great importance, might call a meeting of experienced citizens to hold a *Pratica* upon it, or they might send it direct to the *Ottanta*, from whom it came before the Consiglio Maggiore, and there received the final sanction. In that last assembly laws were not discussed, but only voted, and no one could address the meeting unless called upon by the Signory; and even then he was only allowed to plead in favour of the question. Hence, when the Signori called for the opinion of the Council, the citizens took their places on distinct benches, according to the

magistracy to which they belonged, or the order in which they had been elected; they consulted together, and then sent up one of their number, whom they had appointed to collect their votes, to deliver their opinion; but he was not allowed to say a word against the law proposed by the Signory.* Such were the ancient expedients of a Republic where the doors of the Palazzo had been too widely thrown open to the multitude, whom they wished to keep in check by laws so improvident and so ineffectual.

Be that as it may, the provision of which we have just spoken concludes thus:—‘As the laws of the city are in a state of great confusion, and as no magistrate, either within or without the city, has a distinct knowledge of the duties of his office, it is ordered that a certain number of the citizens be chosen to consolidate the laws in one volume.’† The importance of such a provision can only be rightly judged of by those who have had some acquaintance with the ancient Florentine statutes, and who know the degree of disorder into which, under the Medici, all the institutions and laws of the country had been brought.

During the two days on which the law appointing the

* ‘Those who deprived him of this privilege, did so in order that the councils, being wearied out, might approve of the provisions, whether reasonable or not, and give judgement upon them, although they had heard one side only.’ Guicciardini, *Opere Inedite*, vol. ii. p. 296. Every method was resorted to by which the Signory might always be able to carry their proposal: they might present a law any number of times they pleased on the same day, so that by exhausting the patience of the councils, they might extort their consent. And even the law by which the Consiglio Maggiore was established, declared that the Signory might, at their discretion, present the same law twenty-eight times, at the rate of six times on any one day. This provision, and all the others referred to, may be seen in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni, Libri di Provisioni*, for the years 1494, 1498.

† This provision was voted on December 22, in the Consiglio del Popolo, by 229 for, and 35 against, and on the 23rd in the Consiglio del Comune, by 195 for, and 16 against. — *Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

Consiglio Maggiore was being discussed and passed, another was enacted, that ten citizens should be appointed for the purpose of remitting, either wholly or in part, all arrears of the taxes, and all pecuniary penalties that had been imposed by former governments, and to substitute, for all other taxes, one upon property, including that of the Church, if assented to by Rome.

In those measures all the recommendations of Savonarola had been adopted, almost to the letter. The new Government was established; the Accoppiatori, as a matter of course, had to give up their office, as being no longer of any use; and the two old *Consigli del Comune* and *del Popolo* were at once dissolved. Their last act of any importance was a provision they passed, on the 28th of December, repealing for a certain time the duty on arms, in order that everyone might the more easily be provided with weapons.* It was during the Signory elected for the months of January and February, 1495, that the Consiglio Maggiore passed the laws by which the new form of government was completed and perfected, and from which date they took effect.†

The first thing that called for immediate attention was a reform in the system of taxation.‡ It was a subject on which Savonarola was continually dwelling in his sermons. ‘Lay the taxes solely on property; put an end to the continual loans, and all arbitrary imposts’—was the advice he urged upon the magistrates. To the people he said—‘Citizens, I wish to see you all stedfast in loving and rendering assistance to your comune. A son is under such obligations to his father that he never can do enough for him. So I say to you,

* In the Consiglio del Popolo there were 203 votes for, and only two against the law, in that of the Comune, 166 for, 9 against it.—*Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

† Rinuccini, p. 146; *Archivio delle Riformagioni, Libri di Provisioni*.

‡ See the Sermons on Haggai, and among them the 13th.

your comune is your common father, and therefore you are every one of you bound to help it; and were any of you to say, I have derived no benefit from it, you would say so in ignorance, for the comune protects your property, your family, your children. You ought rather to come forward and say to it, Here are fifty florins; another, Here are one hundred; and another, Here are one thousand. That is what all good citizens should do who love their country.'* And, in truth, while there was, on the one hand, a degree of hardship in the imposition of the taxes greater than words can well describe, on the other hand, the discontent of the people, well-grounded as it might be originally, had arrived to such a pitch, that many put forth claims from exemption from all taxes.

In earlier times, the habits in the Florentine Republic were very temperate, and certain customs duties were sufficient for all the expenses of the State. But wars rendered voluntary loans necessary, and as similar calls went on increasing, without any of the loans being repaid, the state credit got so low, that what had been voluntary became obligatory. When hard pressed, the Signory made arbitrary calls upon certain citizens, and in proportion to their own estimate of the wealth of those upon whom they made their demands: those who had most influence sought by every means in their power to be exempted, and the burdens thus came to fall upon the lower classes, which created a general cry of discontent. In 1427, the Medici, in order to gain the favour of the people and curb the encroachments of the higher families, established the *Cutasto*, or estimate of the value of each person's property, in order that the assessments on each might be fairly made, according to the fortune of the individual. This system sounded (all very)

* Sermons on Amos; that on Tuesday after Easter.

well enough in theory, but when put in practice it was found to be most unjust and cruel. They made the assessments on supposed profits of trade and commerce, which must always be fluctuating. This proceeding, wholly before unknown in Florence, gave rise to the greatest discontent; so much so, that many gave up their trade. This Catasto gave the finishing blow to the industrial arts in Florence. And while it was the cause of so much mischief, it did not supply any remedy to the existing financial embarrassment: the money levied was still called a loan, the sum each time was always arbitrary in amount, and the Republic was rarely in a situation to repay it. The estimating the fortunes of commercial men, necessarily very uncertain, gave great power to the Medici to show favour or disfavour at their own pleasure. This was the state of matters when, on the 3rd of February, 1495, a new law was laid before the Consiglio Maggiore, for the new system of taxation recommended by Savonarola—one devised with so much prudence, wisdom, and on such sound principles, that it has continued to be acted upon ever since. This new law established a tax on property, for the first time in Florence, and also for the first time in any part of Italy; it put an end to all loans and arbitrary assessments, and obliged every citizen, without distinction, to pay ten per cent. of the income he derived from permanent property, and without any claim for repayment. It was called the *Decima*, and a new office was created to make the annual assessments and receive the payments.*

So soon as this most important measure was finally

* This subject has been fully treated in the valuable work *Sulla Decima* of Pagnini, who gives the provisions of the law when it was first passed. The Decima office still exists, its registers are called the *Libri della Decima*, and the first volume contains the accounts of 1494–98. It required, of course, some time before the provisions of such a law could be carried into effect; and it was not until 1516 that leave was obtained to assess ecclesiastical property.

settled, which had been introduced with much prudence and carried so successfully, and in which the part that Savonarola took is worthy of being ranked among the greatest reforms ever achieved by a statesman, there remained two laws to be made of scarcely minor importance. The first was to bring about a general pacification among the citizens, and a general pardon for past offences. The urgency of such a measure had been strongly insisted upon by Savonarola in many of his sermons, so that a general agreement in its favour was prevalent. That, however, was not the case with the other measure proposed, which was called the law of the *Sei Fave*; which gave rise to such lengthened discussions in the meetings of the Signory, led afterwards to so many disturbances and dangers of the Republic, and was the source of so many heavy and unjust charges against Savonarola, that it is necessary for us to enter into a fuller explanation.

According to former statutes, criminal and political offences were generally tried by the *Otto di Guardia e Balia*, magistrates whose sentences were decided by ballot, and by a majority of three-fourths, *sei fave* (six beans, used instead of balls), and they had power to imprison, to banish, and to condemn to loss of property and of life.* As these magistrates were so frequently changed, and party spirit ran so high in Florence, cases occurred almost daily of cruel and most intolerable injustice. All the lawyers, therefore, considered it to be indispensable that there should be some appeal from such judgements, to curb the overbearing authority of such a tribunal, and to put a stop to the evils it inflicted on the city; such was likewise the opinion of Savonarola.†

* The Signory, who were in the habit, as we have said, of interfering in all things, assumed this power, which properly belonged exclusively to the *Otto*.

† All the Florentine political writers are agreed upon this, as may be

In January and February 1495, after his Advent sermons, he preached some on the Psalms,* in which he continued almost daily to recommend the importance of a general pacification, and of an appeal from the decision of the *sei fave*, saying, ‘Florence, forgive and be at peace, and do not for ever be crying out for blood;’† and then continued, ‘We must moderate a little this authority of the *sei fave*, by an appeal to a Council of eighty or a hundred, chosen from among the members of the Consiglio Grande. You may say to me that it would diminish the authority of the Signory, to which I answer, that it would rather increase it. Either the Signory are about to do something wrong, in which case they ought to be deprived of the power of thus acting, or they have a good object in view, and then they ought to have the support of a Council of good citizens.’‡ On another occasion he dwelt with great earnestness on the importance of a reform in the administration of justice, showing the frequent abuse of the application of torture, inculcating peace, and thus concluded: ‘I have told you my opinion as to the decision by the *sei fave*, that it is very necessary to apply a remedy to it, and that should be by an appellant Council.’§ He returned repeatedly to the same argument, until the Signory decided upon framing a provision on the subject, which they laid before the *Ottanta* on March 15, of the same year; and

seen on consulting Giannotti, *Della Repubblica Fiorentina*; and Guicciardini, *Reggimento di Firenze*.

* He began those Sermons January 6, 1495 (new style), and there were eight of them; after which, when Lent began, he preached on the book of Job, but at the conclusion of Lent he resumed, on May 1st, the sermons on the Psalms, and continued them to July 28th, making of the first and second series, twenty-nine in all. The first eight may be considered as a following up of those on Haggai, preached in Advent, and partake of the same character; whereas the remaining twenty-one are supplemental to the Lent sermons on Job.

† First Sermon on the Psalms.

‡ Ibidem.

§ Second Sermon on the Psalms.

considering the question to be one of the gravest importance, they asked for their solemn opinion upon it. It being the custom that a law about to be proposed should not be seen by anyone before being presented to the Councils, the utmost anxiety was shown to hear it read and discussed.

The first part of the provision was in entire accordance with the sentiments of Savonarola; it almost seemed as if he had drawn it up himself; and it was in the following terms: 'Inasmuch as it is of the greatest utility in a well-constituted Republic, that unity and concord should prevail; and in order to walk in the footsteps of our Lord, who in all He did, whether in going about, or discoursing, or when in repose, always spoke of peace; and as we see that in all natural things unity always exists, according to their several natures, whence the philosopher says—power when united is more strong; and, finally, as we have been warned by the supernatural events we have witnessed in the formation of this Government, and how great has been the mercy of the Lord vouchsafed to us, we are bound to imitate it:—

'The magnificent Signori and Gonfalonieri decree, that there shall be a general pacification, that all past offences shall be pardoned, and all penalties incurred by the supporters of the State Government shall be remitted.'*

In the next part of the law, there was some deviation from what Savonarola had advised. It provided that every citizen, eligible to a magisterial office, who, for an offence against the state, had been condemned by the Signory, or by the Otto, to loss of life or corporal punishment, or to a pecuniary fine exceeding 200 florins, or to be imprisoned or reprimanded, shall

* *Archivio delle Riformagioni.*

have the right, within fifteen days, to appeal against the sentence to the Consiglio Maggiore. And in such case, the Signory shall allow anyone to be heard in defence; and the said appeal may be made to the Council six times in two days; and if two-thirds shall vote in favour of the defendant, he shall be acquitted.*

The point on which the law deviated from the recommendation of Savonarola was of great importance; for in place of the appeal being to a limited Council, composed of prudent persons well acquainted with the laws, it was made to the Consiglio Maggiore, whose opinions might be swayed by their momentary passions rather than by a sense of justice; and where the inexperience of the many rather than the prudence of the few might prevail. The Patricians were, from the first, opposed to any kind of appeal; for having seen that the appointments to the office of the Otto fell almost constantly into their hands, they could not bear the idea of any diminution of their authority. But the people, on their side, considered that the Consiglio Maggiore was the supreme power in the city, and, therefore, that everything should, by law, be submitted to them. Feelings so strong made their way into the Signory, and caused much warmth of discussion; but the popular party there, although much the strongest, gave way on the point of the extreme application of the law, requiring only that in more serious cases the larger Council should decide. But as the provision had been drawn up, it was very difficult to make the alteration. As no speeches against the measure could be made in the Council, the only course open to them was either to accept or reject the law altogether; and the rejection was almost impossible, for the movers of the provision had

* *Archivio delle Riformazioni.* See the same provision.

intentionally united it with that for a general pacification, which was universally considered indispensable.

The discussions which had taken place in the meetings of the Signory showed that the more honest of the popular party were quite sensible of what the extreme application of the law might lead to, and did all in their power to amend it; and they would probably have succeeded, had not the enemies of the new Government resorted to a cunning and almost diabolical trick. When they saw that not only the people but the most prudent citizens, and Savonarola himself, were determined to have an appeal against the decision by the *sei fave*, they thought that it would best promote their own object to allow it to be carried; because the extreme application of it would be sure to give rise immediately to great disturbances, and they knew that by disturbances alone could they hope to alter the Government and place it in the hands of the few. Thus, after having done everything in their power to resist the appeal to a limited Council of wise and prudent citizens, they united with all their might, and with a violence almost amounting to fury, to have the appeal given to the Consiglio Maggiore. And now an apparently wonderful change took place in the discussions at the meetings of the Signory; while the popular party were moderating their proposal, and the partisans of Savonarola were loudly expressing their disapprobation of the measure brought forward by the Signory, the enemies of the new Government, the partisans of the Medici, were supporting it with all the eloquence they could employ. In a volume of *Frammenti di Pratiche** (fragments of reports of debates in

* *Archivio delle Riformazioni*. In the old arrangement it is marked cl. ii. No. 37. Among some of those very various miscellaneous fragments we have found some that have been of the greatest use to us. By having examined them with great care, we have discovered documents that have cleared up points in our history that were very obscure, or wrongly understood.

the Signory) we fortunately met with the rough draft, or as it was then called the *straccetto* (draft) of those debates, taken down by the notary of the Signory, which has enabled us to fancy ourselves present at one of the principal and most animated discussions that had ever taken place in the governing body of the Republic. The subject was one of the highest importance; men of great authority took part in the debate, and brought the full force of their eloquence to bear upon it; and, moreover, while we have thus represented the manner in which laws were drawn up and discussed in those old Councils, we have placed in a new light a fact that previously had been much misunderstood, and have entirely disproved one of the most serious charges which have been brought against Savonarola.

The law being thus presented to the citizens, and their opinion asked upon it, the members of the Council took their places on the benches of their several divisions, and after having consulted together, the first who rose to speak was Domenico Bonsi, a friend of Savonarola, and one of the *Accoppiatori*. After stating the opinion of his bench, he recommended the general pacification, showing its utility and necessity, by many quotations from the Gospels and from St. Paul, as well as from Demosthenes and Aristotle. Passing then to the question of the appeal, he said that it certainly would be most useful, but he was bound to state that there was a great diversity of opinion upon it among his colleagues; but as it was not allowed to him to proceed further, and say anything against a law submitted to them by the Signory, he stopped. He was followed by Francesco Gualterotti, who, after bestowing the highest praise on the law for a general pacification, insisted upon the necessity of an appeal from the supreme authority of the Otto, representing that they had always afflicted the city by their sentences

of banishment and confiscation ; yet the new law appeared to him to go to such extraordinary lengths, that it ought to be restricted to a limited period, and not be unlimited, as proposed.

In the course of this animated discussion, Luca Corsini rose to speak ; one of those who, on the day of the tumult, had shut the door of the Palazzo in Piero de' Medici's face. He was a citizen of great authority, and spoke with much eloquence ; and being one of the warmest supporters of the popular party, he described in glowing colours the very lamentable condition of the times. We see, he said, the whole of Italy agitated by new and great dangers ; and as we are in the very centre, we are necessarily exposed to suffer from them more than in any other part. Therefore, if we are to be respected by our powerful neighbours, we must show them that we are an united people, free from internal discord ; for we have already seen that, on the first signs of divisions amongst us, they are quite ready to fall upon us. We, on our side, have given an opportunity to everyone to be chosen a member of the Council ; so that if we do not give contentment to all the friends of the old Government, they will secretly work against us. If there were no other reasons to influence our conduct, he said, raising his voice to a lofty pitch, the example set before us by Our Lord ought to suffice ; for He, having stretched forth his sword of justice over us, has thought it good to withdraw it, and in His most tender mercy has pardoned us. Let us, then, show mercy ; let there be a general pardon. And should this appear to anyone to be an extraordinary extent of mercy, let him bear in mind that in extraordinary cases to depart from order is the best way to preserve order.

Proceeding then to the question of the *sei fave*, he became still more warm, declaring some modification of that authority to be absolutely necessary. And giving

full vent to the democratic spirit, which so easily exceeds due limits, he added—‘The body of the Republic is one and indivisible, and is composed of the whole people; who, not being able to attend to the administration of all things, has appointed certain magistrates. But when doubts, disorders, and dissensions arise, as every day’s experience tells us they will arise, it is but just that recourse should be had to that Great Council which represents the people, and from whom the magistrates have received their offices; nor can it be said to be any diminution of the authority of the Signory to require them to appeal to that people to whom the whole Republic belongs: and if, moreover, we take into consideration the events of those latter days, we shall be convinced that it is a matter of the highest prudence and wisdom that the laws now before us should be well received.’

So soon as Corsini had ended his animated speech, all eyes turned to the eminent lawyer Guidantonio Vespucci, who was renowned for his eloquence, his learning, and as being one of the most strenuous supporters of the Patrician party; the same lawyer who, in the preceding December, brought forward in the Palazzo so many reasons for opposing the proposed form of popular government. His legal knowledge added much weight to his opinion, and, aware of this, he spoke with much earnestness, and used all his powers of persuasion. He took special pains to praise the speeches of those who had risen before him, ‘because every one of us,’ he said, ‘has the same object in view, although there may be different ways of arriving at it, namely, to render our liberty secure. I am pleased, therefore, to see that many have frankly expressed their opinion to be against that of the Signory; for it is by such a proceeding only that we can arrive at the truth.*

* This was almost ironical, and was meant as a reproof to those who,

As for my own opinion,' he continued, passing at once to the question of the *sei fave*, 'I cannot view the subject in any other light than as a means by which we may discover how equality shall be maintained among all the citizens; and if the old road lead us that way we ought to keep to it; but if not, then we ought to take another. Now the old law appears to me to be very dangerous, and whoever rightly considers the matter will see that neither in principle nor in practice, nor in justice, is it advisable to give the Signory so great a power without any appeal from their judgements. In France there is an appeal from the King to the Parliament of Paris; in Germany, from the Emperor to the Pope; and there is even an appeal from a sentence of the sovereign pontiff.* No one, therefore, need take it amiss to have his mistakes corrected by another, as they may have arisen from too great haste, or from inadvertence. And if princes who are irresponsible to law, spontaneously submit to an appeal, why should magistrates object, who derive their whole authority from the people? The proposed appeal, therefore, does no more than restore to the people their own right, and apply a restriction on the immediate desires of the ambitious. A knowledge that their sentence will require to be approved of by the Consiglio Maggiore will certainly operate as a powerful check upon the judges, and I do not see what harm we have any reason to fear will arise, if so injurious an authority as that of the decision by *sei fave* be at last put an end to.

'As to the proposal of a general pacification, it is unnecessary to discuss it, for there is but one question

contrary to law, had allowed themselves to speak in opposition to the motion of the Signory, although only partially.

* The Council of Trent had not yet been assembled, and that of Constance was fresh in people's memory; the doctrine that an appeal might be made from the Pope to a council had not then received the condemnation of the Roman Church.

remaining among the citizens on the subject, namely, how soon and how general it shall take place, in order to make it most useful. But,' he added, in conclusion, 'no pacification we can agree to will be so beneficial as the annulment of that accursed authority, the decision by the *sei fave*, the cause of all our dissensions.*

It was no small surprise to all present to hear Vespucci defending the rights of the people with so much warmth, he who, no farther back than in the preceding December, had opposed them with equal earnestness. However, when his discourse was thrown into the scale, it at once preponderated, and on March 18, the new law was approved of in the Council of the Ottanta,† by 80 votes for and 13 against it; and next day it passed the Consiglio Maggiore by 543 for, and 163 against it. Such is the true account of this discussion, which has been passed over in silence by all previous writers; while, with the utmost injustice, they charge Savonarola with having been the author of that extreme measure; his own sermons demonstrate that he had advocated one much more moderate; and we have seen, by what passed at the meetings of the Signory, that his partisans had almost violated the parliamentary usages of the Republic in resisting extreme opinions.‡

* These speeches are all to be found in the *Frammento di Pratica* above quoted.—*Archivio delle Riformagioni*. We have endeavoured to give the sense faithfully, almost the very words employed; except in translating them from the Latin, in which they were taken down by the notary, again into the Italian in which they were spoken.

† See the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*. In the Ottanta were also the Signory, the Collegi, &c.: the number of members exceeded the denominational figures.

‡ We must add, that the contemporary authors are either silent on this subject, or consider the charge made against Savonarola as an opinion which is contradicted by others. In the sixteenth century, however, the enemies of the friar maintained it, and they had led many to believe it, who had a friendly feeling for his memory. Thus we find that Guicciardini, in his *Reggimento di Firenze*, p. 165, makes Nero say, in speaking of the *Otto di Guardia e Balia*:—'And I will add, what I understood this friar to

This law must be held to have been the first triumph of the party who contemplated the destruction of the Republic: a party whom we shall soon prove to have been indefatigable in its efforts to ruin Savonarola, and who were ever ready to avail themselves of every kind of double-dealing and cunning, and in which they displayed a degree of refinement and astuteness which put to shame all the diplomatists of modern days. Savonarola, it is true, remained silent after the law had passed, as he saw that it would do no good to sow dissension between the people and the Signory; and, perhaps also for the reason, that neither he, nor many others, could foresee the mischievous and dangerous consequences to which a measure most just in principle, but only carried somewhat too far, must eventually lead. But of all the evils that might be foreseen, or which afterwards occurred, the greatest was that which was then present and prominent; for in those very days, when the people had decreed that there should be peace and a general pardon, the enemies of the new Government united to form a party to ruin that Republic which

'have proposed, that on the condemnation of a citizen for a political offence, but for no other cause, there should be an appeal, not to the 'Consiglio Grande as he had proposed, but to the senate,'—(on the margin of the MS. the author adds,—'it would have been better if the appeal 'had been to the Quarantia), where the magistrates who had condemned 'him being present, might defend their judgement.' Without perceiving it, he sustains the very opinion of Savonarola, which his sermons prove beyond all manner of doubt. Machiavelli, who is even more explicit in charging Savonarola as the author of this law, says:—'Florence, after 'the year 1494, had its government reformed by the help of the friar 'Girolando Savonarola, whose writings exhibit the learning, the prudence, 'and the virtue of his mind; and in order to secure the power of the 'citizens, among other provisions in the constitution, he got a law 'passed giving an appeal to the people from a sentence, in political 'offences, by the Otto and the Signory, which he had repeatedly urged, 'and carried with the greatest difficulty.'—*Discorsi*, lib. i. c. 45). This opinion of Machiavelli and other writers, while it cannot stand against the evidence of facts, proves on the other hand, how great must have been the part Savonarola had acted in the formation of the new Government, that he should be represented as the author of those same laws of which he had disapproved.

just had conferred a special benefit upon them. Certain it is, that on that day there was great exasperation; and such ingratitude and duplicity must have highly irritated the frank and open-hearted Savonarola. But he preserved at the time a profound silence on the subject; in his future sermons, however, he betrays a degree of irritation and an asperity of expression that he had never before exhibited. So true is the old proverb that *a drop of vinegar will sour a cask of honey*.

The passing of the law of appeal from decisions by the *sei fave* was the beginning of attention being directed to the administration of justice, and a desire was evinced to view the subject as recommended by Savonarola in all his sermons.* A state of the greatest disorder, an indescribable confusion, both in the laws themselves and in their administration, prevailed in this department of the state, chiefly caused by Lorenzo de' Medici, who had so mixed up the old and the new laws of the Republic, that it was impossible to unravel them.† In ancient times both civil and criminal cases were adjudicated by two magistrates, called the *Potestà* and the *Capitano del Popolo*, who were always foreigners.‡ They tried cases of importance, and heard appeals from the inferior judges who sat in the different quarters of the city.§ About the year 1477 these two magistracies were abolished,|| the effect of which was greatly to increase the importance of the Signory and the Otto, as a great part of the functions devolved upon them. In that year also

* See those on Haggai and on the Psalms.

† In this way references had continually to be made to him, who would be judge and head of all things.

‡ That is, not Florentines.—Tr.

§ See the Florentine Statutes, published in 1778 at Friburg, in three volumes.

|| *Archivio delle Riformazioni*. See the Provision of April 20, 1498, re-establishing the *Potestà* and *Capitano del Popolo*, for particulars relating to them.

the authority of the tribunal of commerce was diminished; it was called the *Casa della Mercatanzia*, and held its sittings near the Palazzo, and was a very important institution in the Republic; for it formed the nucleus, as it were, the principal centre of vitality of the industry of Florence. And as nothing had since been thought of in the way of a reform of that tribunal, there was no certainty as to the magistrate to whom application should be made in commercial cases, so that justice was very imperfectly administered. Savonarola recommended a thorough reform; that a *Ruota* should be established, that is, a tribunal composed of experienced citizens, in easy circumstances, but who should, at the same time, be well paid, that there might be no temptation to corruption. ‘But,’ he said, ‘should that be considered too expensive, a good and able judge of appeal should be appointed forthwith,* and the *Mercatanzia* re-constituted, choosing a foreigner to be the judge, according to the ancient statutes.’† The establishment of a *Ruota* was a thing so entirely new in Florence, that it did not take place for several years later,‡ and in the meantime they thought of restoring the *Mercatanzia* in all its original dignity.

On May 20 and 21, 1495, a new law passed the two councils, which provided as follows:—‘Considering that nothing is so important as the administration of justice, and as it has been seen how very low the reputation of the *Casa della Mercatanzia* has fallen from the confusion in the laws passed subsequent to the

* See the sermons on Haggai and those on the Psalms. See also the sermons on Ruth and Micah, preached in the festivals of 1496, and chiefly that of July 3.

† Ibidem.

‡ On April 30, 1498, they decided on returning to a Potestà and a Capitano del Popolo. (See the Provisions in the *Archivio delle Riformazioni*), but in 1502 the recommendation of Savonarola was adopted, and the *Ruota* was established.

ancient statute,* and it being very desirable that the Magnificent Signory and Gonfaloniere should apply a remedy thereto by following the examples to be found in the ancient and well-considered laws, so as to restore the said Casa to its good and ancient reputation, it is provided and decreed :—

‘That the Signory of the Mercatanzia shall proceed to elect thirty-eight wise citizens of not less than thirty-five years of age, who shall be taken from the Consiglio Maggiore, and the thirteen who shall have most votes shall be the *Statutari and Riformatori della Casa e Corte della Mercatanzia ed Università dei mercatanti*, with the same authority as that possessed by the *Statutari* in the year 1477, to repeal, add to, and thoroughly amend the statute; the which, after it shall have been approved of by the Consiglio Maggiore, shall have full force.’ By this measure the ancient and illustrious Casa della Mercatanzia was re-established, and there was compiled, in Florence, that second code of mercantile law which is known to merchants by the title of the Statute of Ninety-six.† It was an additional proof of the revived wisdom in civil affairs of the Florentines, and proved of the greatest advantage to the people, to the arts, and in the administration of justice.

The new Government now advancing more and more towards completion, it became necessary that the Accoppiatori should lay down their office, they being no longer of any use, and interfering with the duties of the other magistrates. In this, too, Savonarola assisted; and his friend Domenico Bonsi was among the first of those who voluntarily resigned.‡ The rest followed the example, and on June 8 a provision was

* The ancient Statute was compiled in 1393.

† An ancient copy of the new Statute, preceded by the provision above mentioned, exists in the Magliabechian library, cl. **xxix.** cod. 143.

‡ Burlamacchi, *Vita*, &c.

passed authorising and empowering them to renounce all the authority and power that had been given them by the Parlamento,* and to transfer the same to the Consiglio Maggiore. The same law enacted the new mode and forms of procedure which were thenceforth to be observed in the election of the Signory.†

The authority of the Accoppiatori having terminated, and fortunately without any disturbance, there was still another very important law to be made: it was necessary to abolish *Parlamenti*: the origin of all the dissensions, all the changes, all the tyrannies that had afflicted the city. As the Consiglio Maggiore could now make and unmake everything, there was no longer any use for a *Parlamento*; nor could there be any object for assembling one, except to destroy the Republic. It was certain that if Piero de' Medici were to succeed in getting back to Florence, and he was doing all he could to obtain the assistance of France

* See the Provision in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

† The provision in the law for this purpose enacts as follows:—

‘At a meeting of the Consiglio Maggiore, ninety-six electors shall be drawn by lot; that is, twenty-four for each quarter of the city. Each of the said twenty-four shall name one person from his own quarter: the ninety-six persons so named shall be those from whom the Signory shall be chosen. From those who have more than one-half of the votes, eight shall be selected (that is, two for each quarter), and shall be put into the general *borsa*, putting the one most advanced in years in the *borsellino*. Then, for each of the effective Signory, two shall be chosen by lot, from among those who had been included in the number of the half above mentioned, who, as a matter of respect, shall have the rank of *veduti*, thus completing the twenty-four.’ With regard to the *borsellino*, it appears that he who was most advanced in years was put into it, to be the first *Proposto*, an office changed as before mentioned, by rotation, among the Signory.

For choosing the Gonfaloniere, twenty electors were appointed by lot, and each of the first ten elected two, one to be Gonfaloniere and the other to be *veduto*: the other ten, also chose two, one to be Gonfaloniere, and the other to be Notary. In this way, twenty names were selected, one of whom was to be Gonfaloniere. A scrutiny then took place, and he who had most votes, and provided they exceeded one half, became Gonfaloniere; and the two next who had the greatest number of votes, out of respect, received the rank of *veduti*. See the same *Provisione* in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*.

and the princes of Italy, and not without some success, he would have no other means of obtaining the favour of the populace than by Parlamenti. And if his friends, who, it was now evident, were neither few nor feeble, had thought of making a move in the city in his favour, they could not hope for success by any other means; for the Parlamenti had always been the most docile instruments of tyranny, and the easiest way to effect a change of Government.

We find the Florentine historians and political writers pointing out, on many occasions, and at great length, the mischiefs, the dangers, and the enormous abuses of these Parlamenti,* and in the period now under consideration, the question was taken up with great eagerness. The plottings of the absent Medici was evident to everyone, the discussions on the subject of the *sei fave* had shown that there were enemies of liberty in the very heart of the Republic; men's minds were, therefore, strongly excited, and that of Savonarola so much so, that he was led to make use of very different language from the pulpit from that usual to him, and certainly most unsuitable to the character of a minister of peace, which he had always hitherto shown himself: 'I have been considering this matter of your Parlamento, and can view it in no other light than as an instrument of destruction, and, therefore, it must be done away with. People, I say, come forward. Are not you now yourselves the Signory? Yes. Well then, take care that no Parlamento be called, if you do not desire to have your

* Guicciardini, among others, thus speaks of Parlamenti, in his *Discorsi* (*Opere inedite*, vol. ii. p. 299). 'To preserve any stability in this form of government, it is necessary to hold firm to the law which prevents the assembling of a Parlamento, which is alone enough to destroy all popular vitality; for it is nothing else than by force and the terror of arms to constrain the people to agree to whatever may be proposed to them, with the semblance of the assent having been freely given by all.

‘ power taken from you. Be assured that a Parlamento
‘ means nothing less than to take the governing power
‘ out of the hands of the people. Keep this in mind,
‘ and teach it to your sons. People, so soon as you
‘ hear the sound of the bell to call a Parlamento, arise,
‘ and unsheath your swords. What is it your wish to do?
‘ Cannot this Council do everything? What law do you
‘ wish to have made? Cannot the Council make it? I
‘ would have you make this provision—that so soon as
‘ the Signory enter upon their office, they shall take an
‘ oath not to call a Parlamento; and if anyone should
‘ be secretly attempting to call one, let him who dis-
‘ closes the attempt, if he be one of the Signory, receive
‘ 30,000 ducats; if another person, 1,000. And if he,
‘ who is making the attempt, be one of the Signory, let
‘ him lose his head; if another person, let him be de-
‘ clared a rebel, and have all his goods confiscated. And
‘ let all the Gonfalonieri on entering upon their office take
‘ an oath, that so soon as they hear the sound of the bell
‘ calling a Parlamento, they shall forthwith hasten to sack
‘ the houses of the Signory, and let the Gonfalonieri
‘ who shall sack one of the houses receive one-fourth of
‘ the property found therein, the rest to be divided
‘ among the company. Further, if the Signory are
‘ going to call a Parlamento, the moment they set foot
‘ on the ringhiera let them no longer be considered as
‘ Signory; and anyone cutting them in pieces shall not
‘ commit any sin.’* This was a momentary extravagance
of language; and it is to be observed that confiscations
and the sacking and destroying of houses were at that
time very common punishments for political offences.
But neither such customs, nor the consideration that
the Medici and their adherents had begun to conspire
against the Republic, even to the extent, as we shall

* *Prediche sui Salmi*.—Sermon xxvi., preached July 28.

see, that they had already arrived in force at the very walls of the city, afford Savonarola any excuse for having allowed himself to be carried away by passion so far beyond all just limits.

He preached that sermon on July 28, 1495, and on the 13th of August a law was passed, declaring, 'That the reform of the Government of the state now established having been to secure the liberty of this most prosperous people, in order to preserve the said Government in perpetuity, so that not only we but our children may enjoy the said liberty, and that no one may dare to attempt to become a tyrant and subjugate the free citizens, and knowing that in no way can our liberty be so easily subverted, and this new and good Government be obstructed as by the means of a Parlamento; and, finally, knowing that no case can occur to make the calling of a Parlamento necessary, the Government having been placed in the hands of the people, who are the true and legitimate Signory of our city, and have full power to enact new laws without the convocation of a Parlamenti, &c.

'The magnificent Signory and Gonfaloniere provide and decree, that for the future it shall not be lawful to call a Parlamento; that the Signory on entering upon their office shall take an oath never to convoke one; and whosoever shall conspire for such a purpose shall be liable to the punishment of death, and a reward of 300 florins shall be given to him who shall reveal such conspiring.'*

* See the provision in the *Archivio delle Riformagioni*. Shortly afterwards Savonarola put up the following lines in large letters in the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore:—

Se questo popolar consiglio e certo
 Governo, popol, della tua cittate
 Conservi, che da Dio t'è stato offerto,
 In pace starai sempre e 'n libertate.
 Tien, dunque, l'occhio della mente aperto,
 Chè molte insidie ognor ti fien parate;

After this first transport of anger, Savonarola directed his whole mind to the work of peace; and he occupied himself with preparing for the introduction into Florence of a *Monte di Pietà*. 'I recommend this Monte di Pietà to you that everyone may promote it, and especially that women should bestow upon it all their superfluities. Let everyone present an offering, and let it not be of quattrine,* but of ducats.' † And he continued to recommend this support very frequently in his sermons, urging the claims of the lower orders on the charity of the citizens generally, specially on the ladies and the wealthy.

Certainly nothing could be imagined more useful for the relief of the miseries endured by the people than this Monte di Pietà. There were then Jews in Florence who lent money at $32\frac{1}{2}$ per cent with compound interest; so that it was shown that a loan of 100 florins, on the ordinary terms, would in 50 years amount to 49,792,556 florins.‡ Such a state of things had created a very bitter hatred against the Jews among the humbler ranks of the people, and had led many to endeavour to find some remedy for such an evil. Frà Barnaba da Terni had already recommended from the pulpit a Monte di Pietà, and had established one at Perugia; and Frà Bernardino da Feltre devoted himself to their institution in several of the towns of Italy, and in the time of Lorenzo de' Medici came to Florence with that

E sappi che chi vuol far parlamento,
Vuol torti delle mani il reggimento.

Which may be thus translated :—If, O people, you preserve this sure popular governing council for your city, which God has offered to you, you will always have peace and liberty. Keep, therefore, the eye of your mind open; for many snares will be laid for you; and be assured that he who desires a Parlamento, wishes to take the government out of your hands.—TR.

* Farthings.—TR.

† Sermons on Amos, preached on Tuesday after Easter.

‡ This is no exaggerated calculation of historians, but is stated in the very law which established the Monte di Pietà.

object. On March 26, 1473, a provision had been made, when it appears that a Jew arrived with a sum of 100,000 florins to bribe the magistrates and even Lorenzo the Magnificent himself, whereupon the scheme was abandoned, and Frà Bernardino was banished from Florence. In the time of Piero de' Medici the friars of the Order of *Minori* instigated the populace against the Jews, and preached in favour of a Monte di Pietà, which gave rise to many disturbances, caused chiefly by the imprudent conduct of Piero, who, only to oppose the magistrates and the better-informed classes, supported the *Frati Minori*.*

Savonarola abstained from mixing himself up with these useless controversies, and never allowed a word to escape from him against the Jews: he wished that they should be converted, and not persecuted. When, therefore, liberty was established, he set about defending the Monte di Pietà, and it was by his sole efforts that one was founded in Florence. A law was approved of on December 28, 1495, and with this preamble:—‘Blessed is he who takes care of the needy and the poor; in the day of adversity the Lord will deliver him.’ It then goes on to denounce the pestiferous whirlpool and baneful poison of usury, that had already existed for sixty years in Florence, maintained by that vile and godless sect of the Jews. It concludes with enacting that eight citizens shall be chosen, who, without receiving any payment, shall draw up a constitution for the Monte, after which every contract made with Jews shall be void, who within a year shall leave the city. The statute being completed, received the approval of the Councils on April 13, 1496. The whole tenour of it was in favour of the people, and the expense of the management

* Parenti, in his *Storia di Firenze*, relates these facts, and adds, that the educated classes were all in favour of the Jews.

of the institution was restricted to 600 florins annually, the interest thereof to be paid by the borrowers who pledged their effects was not to exceed six per cent. The borrowers were required to take an oath that they would not gamble with the money they obtained at the Monte.* Savonarola, in his zeal for the good of the people, in promoting this most righteous institution, proposed that all employed in the management of it should be paid by the Comune, and that the loans should be without interest.† This it was impossible to agree to, but the statute afforded great relief to the humbler classes; nor was it necessary for the accomplishment of this object that the Jews should be expelled; for in the days of Savonarola, although passions were strongly excited, there was no intolerance.

By the laws we have now described, the Florentine people established their liberty, and gave themselves a new constitution. While examining the books of the Provisions passed in those years, we found a considerable number of which we have taken no notice on the present occasion, because not possessing any general interest. But among them there was one, which we must not omit to lay before our readers, which was passed on June 8, 1495. The magnificent Signory and Gonfalonieri introduced it in the following terms: ‘Considering that Messer Dante Alighieri, great grandson of the poet Dante, has not been able to return to this city from his want of means to pay the taxes imposed by the Signory in the past November and December, and they

* *Archivio delle Riformazione.* The provisions relating to the Monte di Pietà have been published by Passerini in his *Storia degli Stabilitamenti di Beneficenza in Firenze*. The author, however, has fallen into a mistake in saying that it is an error to say that Savonarola had been in favour of the Monte di Pietà, for that he was, on the contrary, opposed to it, because it was promoted by his enemies the Frati Minori. This is contradicted not only by the concurrent statements of all the historians and biographers of Savonarola, but by all that the friar himself said publicly from the pulpit.

† Sermons on Amos, No. xxi.

being of opinion that it is very fitting that some mark of gratitude should be shown, through his descendants, to a poet who is so great an ornament to this city, be it enacted that the said Messer Dante may consider himself free, and hereby is freed, from every sentence of outlaw, exile, &c.* This was but a tardy forgiveness shown to the memory of the great Ghibelline, and was far too weak an act of justice to the name of the divine poet; nevertheless, it was honourable to the Republic to have thought of such a measure in the first days of its existence. We do not propose to notice the other laws, as we have only thought it necessary to bring before the reader the prominent features in the new Government.

Thus, in a single year the freedom of a whole people had been established; liberty was granted to them to carry arms; the system of taxation had been reformed; usury had been abolished by the Monte di Pietà; a law for a general amnesty had been passed; the administration of justice had been amended; Parlamenti were abolished, and the Consiglio Maggiore was established, to which the affection of the people of Florence continued more stedfastly attached than it had ever been to any other of their political institutions. There was then erected on the platform of the *ringhiera* of the Palazzo a statue of Judith slaying Holoernes, the work of the immortal Donatello, in order that it might stand in that prominent position before the eyes of the whole people as a symbol of the triumph of liberty over tyranny; and on its pedestal were inscribed these words:—*Exemplum sal: pub: cives posuere MCCCCXCV.*† (The citizens placed this symbol of the public safety, in the year 1495.)†

* *Archivio delle Riformagioni.*

† This statue belonged to the Medici, and after the ruin of the Republic, they placed it in the Loggia dei Lanzi,¹ where it now

¹ A celebrated Portico adjoining the Palazzo.—TR.

All this occurred in a brief space of time, without a sword having been drawn, without a drop of blood having been shed, without a single civic riot ; and that too in Florence, the city of tumults. But the greatest marvel of all was the power exercised by a single man ; and he, a simple friar,* directing the work from his pulpit, and bringing it to a happy conclusion ; an instance, unexampled in history, of the omnipotence of the human will and of persuasive eloquence. He was never to be seen in meetings in the Piazza, nor at the sittings of the Signoria ; but he became the very soul of the whole

stands with the same Republican inscription. It is the opinion of some, that when the masterpiece of Benvenuto Cellini, representing Perseus holding up the head of Medusa which he had struck off, was placed in the same Loggia, it was intended to be as a counter symbol of a revived despotism giving a death-blow to the Republic.

* We will here show the terms in which Savonarola spoke on April 1, 1495, of the changes brought about by the new Government, and of the new laws it had passed. 'When I saw that a change of the Government was about to take place, and considered that it could not be effected without scandal and great effusion of blood, I determined—being inspired to that end by God—to begin to preach to the people, to exhort them to repent, that they might obtain the mercy of the Almighty. On St. Matthew the Apostle's day, that is, on September 21, 1494, I began ; and, with all the strength that God had given me, I exhorted the people to confess, to fast, to pray. This having been willingly done, the goodness of God changed his avenging sword of justice into forgiveness, and on the 11th day of November, the State and Government were miraculously changed, without bloodshed, and without any other disgrace having been committed in your city. And you, people of Florence, having to accept the new Government, I convoked you, excluding women, in the great church, the magnificent Signory and the other magistrates of your city being present ; and after much had been said on the good government of cities, conformably with the learning of philosophers and holy theologists, I showed you what sort of government was most suited to the nature of the Florentine people ; and in the construction of my discourse I proposed four things that you ought to do. First, to fear God ; secondly, to love the common weal of the city, and strive after that, rather than that of individuals ; thirdly, to establish peace between you and those who had been your rulers in the former Government ; and adding to these, an appeal from the decisions by the *'sei fave.'*—The 29th sermon on Job.

It is to be observed that this sermon was preached immediately after the passing of the law giving that appeal ; and that here, as elsewhere, he only speaks of having advised an appeal, but never that to the Consiglio Maggiore.

people, and the chief author of all the laws by which the new Government was constituted. After the Revolution in 1494, we at once recognise in almost every word of the Provisions, the impress of the democratic friar. Latin becomes Italian,* a new form, a new style, are discoverable, and a new spirit animates them: they almost speak with the voice of Savonarola; and very frequently they are nothing more than extracts from the sermons in which he had recommended the adoption of the law. When we enter the halls of the councils we hear the citizens supporting his sentiments, and discussing them in his language. But how can we express our astonishment when, arrived at the end of that same year of 1495, we look back and find that Florence had never before shown so much wisdom and prudence, that the form of government then established was the best, the only secure one, that the people had been able to devise, during so many years of tumultuary existence? When, further, we find that the greatest Florentine political writers, after having submitted it to a close examination, could not refrain from bestowing upon it their highest commendation? †

Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Giannotti, writing when Florentine liberty was in a state of decay, and when all the hopes of the patriots had vanished, meditating upon the whole history of Rome, of Florence, and of Italy, to discover a form of government that would be best adapted to their country whenever fortune might improve her prospects; and all coming to the conclusion that no better could be adopted than the Consiglio

* Before the year 1494, the Provisions were written in Latin, but immediately after the expulsion of the Medici, they were written in Italian. In like manner after the first six months of 1495, the notes of the debates in the *Pratiche* are in Italian: some time after Latin is resumed.

† See the note at the end of the chapter.

Maggiore as established in 1494 ; only modifying it so as to meet the changes which time had brought about. And it is truly wonderful to think how little those great geniuses departed from the ideas of Savonarola in the modifications they proposed. They advocate a Gonfaloniere for life : he had recommended it several times before his death ; they think that a special tribunal for the adjudication of criminal cases would be advisable : he advised it in his sermons ; they propose free discussions in the Councils : and there was nothing that he had more constantly recommended.

Some, it is true, have taken pains to prove that Savonarola was not the author of the Consiglio Maggiore, because Soderini had brought the idea of it with him from Venice ; and that he did not invent the Monte di Pietà, because it had been recommended before by other preachers in their discourses, and so forth. But they labour in vain ; Savonarola did not invent either of the institutions, but he succeeded in getting them adopted in Florence, which was a still greater merit. Institutions are neither created nor imagined ; they are the offspring of the times and the condition of the people. He knew where to find them ; how to ascertain their value ; he had influence to persuade others of their utility, and he got them adopted ; higher praise cannot be bestowed on his political talent. We repeat that Savonarola saw more justly than those around him, for he saw through the medium of his natural good sense ; of his devoted love for all that was good, and of a mind free from all preconceived theories and party spirit. He, therefore, is justly entitled to be reckoned among the great founders of the Republic.

If, to prove the truth of the judgement we have pronounced upon him, it be not enough to produce the testimony of history ; if the laws themselves, of which we have given an account, be not sufficient ; if the

authority of the great political writers of Italy do not suffice, we know not to what arguments we can have recourse. There is at the present day a prevalent opinion respecting Savonarola, founded upon some of his peculiar theories, and judging him solely by them. To this we answer at once by saying that during his political life, in the year under consideration, he knew how to moderate those theories ; and, moreover, that although we find them too often mixed up with the subjects of his religious, scientific, and even political discourses, it was an error common to the greatest men of his time. Most assuredly the strange fancies of Jerome Cardan, of Pomponaccio, of Porta, and many others, were far more wild ; and yet no one would ever think of denying to them the genius they showed in physical and mathematical sciences. It is equally impossible to deny to Savonarola great political eminence, even when endeavouring to throw personal ridicule on him ; when we have before us the evidence of a whole people animated solely by that life which he had imparted to them, as well as that of a constitution created by him, which is the admiration of ancient and modern writers ? If there were in his character certain peculiarities, which cast a shade upon it, and prevent the formation, in the mind of the reader, of a clear and definite judgement upon it, we ask him to continue the perusal of this narrative ; because, when he considers the minute and careful researches on which it rests, he may perchance view the character of Savonarola in a somewhat different light from that in which he has been led to regard it by the perusal of former biographies.

NOTE

On the opinions professed by the great Florentine political writers on Savonarola and the Government instituted by him.

It does not appear that Machiavelli had much sympathy for Savonarola; for in one of his early letters he speaks of him only as a subtle and sly friar, but that opinion gives greater weight to the respect with which he mentions him at a later period of his life. He does not by any means abstain from noticing some of what he considers to be his great political errors; and more particularly on the question of the law on the *sei fave*, of which we have spoken above, and to which we shall again have occasion to refer; but, on many occasions, he mentions 'the learning, the prudence, and the purity of his mind.' (Discorsi, lib. i. c. xlv.) He describes him as 'breathing divine virtue' (Decennale primo); and on another occasion, he says, 'of such a man one ought never to speak but with reverence.' (Discorsi, lib. i., c. xi.) Afterwards when treating of the institutions founded by Savonarola, he is constrained to confess the great importance of them; as may be seen in his Discorso to Leo X., in which he expressly states that there is no other way to bring the State of Florence again into order, than by restoring the Consiglio Maggiore. 'No Republic can ever be placed on a firm basis without giving general satisfaction, and there never will be a general satisfaction amongst the citizens of Florence, until the hall of the Consiglio Maggiore be reopened to them; and of this your Holiness may rest assured, that whoever thinks to get power in that state, must before all things determine to throw that hall open.' Were anyone disposed to remark that

the praises of Savonarola by Machiavelli are bestowed rather on the laws he instituted and the predominance he knew how to acquire over the minds of the people, than on him personally, this is easily explained by the great difference, the almost entirely opposite nature, in the characters of the two men; the one abounding in faith, and overflowing with spontaneous enthusiasm; the other thoroughly analytical, doubting, penetrating. They were unquestionably both great men, but who could never have been brought to a right comprehension of each other. Savonarola would have condemned with the utmost severity the sentiments of the Florentine secretary; and Machiavelli, notwithstanding his admiration for the founder of the Republic of 1494, could never refrain from sarcastic remarks on the friar and prophet. Therefore the irony which is seen sometimes to lurk under the terms of praise, and the blame which is often softened by esteem and respect, give us a better idea of what Machiavelli really thought of Savonarola than if he had pronounced a definite opinion upon his character.

Then Giannotti, that noble and generous citizen,* who had the misfortune twice to witness the downfall of the liberty of his country, and twice to suffer exile, the sorrow of which he assuaged by devoting himself to studying by what means a good Government could best be established, should Florence again be free, never felt the genius of Savonarola rise before him without his brave patriotic heart throbbing more strongly. His admiration for the institutions the friar had counselled, is expressed with a degree of spontaneous ingenuousness that almost moves one to tears. ‘He who estab-

* DONATO GIANNOTTI, born in 1493, was banished in 1530, returned to Florence in 1536, and afterwards became a voluntary exile, and died at Venice in 1563. The works by which he is most distinguished are his treatises on the governments of the Republics of Florence and Venice — Reumont, *Tavol e Cronologiche*, 1841.—TR.

lished,' he says, 'the Consiglio Grande was a far wiser man than Giano della Bella,* because the latter thought of securing the liberties of the people by humbling the great, whereas the object of the other was to secure the liberties of all.' (*Della Repubblica fiorentina*, p. 87, Firenze, 1850.) His whole work is full of similar expressions of admiration. And when he comes to reprove the abuses prevailing among the friars of his time, of their bringing matters of State into their sermons, even in the Palazzo, he adds: 'And if Friar Girolamo preached 'there, we have now no longer a friar Girolamo distinguished by great learning, by prudence and wisdom; 'therefore his successors ought not to be so presumptuous as to suppose themselves capable of doing what 'he did; who in every respect was so vastly their superior.' (*Della Repubblica fiorentina*, lib. iii., p. 233.)

But if we would fully understand the estimation in which Savonarola was held by great statesmen, and would rightly comprehend the nature of the Government he established, and the vast services he rendered to his country, we must read the *Opere inedite* of Francesco Guicciardini. His *Storia d'Italia* was written at a time unfavourable to the friar, and not with entire freedom; but in those works which he composed in the privacy of his study, and which he perhaps never intended should see the light, we find a very different man. It appears as if he wished to lighten a burden that weighed upon his conscience, and give vent to opinions that had been long and forcibly repressed in his breast. It is as if the pompous and corrupting mantle of diplomacy had dropped from his shoulders, and that we see him standing before us in the plain dress of the Florentine Republican. An eloquent hymn of liberty

* GIANO DELLA BELLA.—A rich citizen of Florence of the popular party, who in 1295 was condemned to perpetual banishment, and died in France.—Reumont, *Tavole Cronologiche*, 1841.—TR.

comes forth from his soul, but which he only permits the walls of his chamber to echo, not having had the courage to let it be heard by his fellow-citizens. In those writings he can scarcely find words of sufficient praise for Savonarola, and the Consiglio Maggiore so favoured by him. In his *Ricordi* he says, ‘that such was the love of the Florentines for the liberty conferred upon them in 1494, that no arts, no soothings, no cunning devices of the Medici ever sufficed to make them forget it; that there was a time when it might have been easy, when it was only a question of depriving the few of their liberty; but after the Consiglio Grande, it was the deprivation of liberty to all.’ (*Ricordi* xxi., xxxviii., cclxxvi.) And in his *Reggimento di Firenze* he again and again repeats, ‘You are under a heavy obligation to this friar, who arrested the tumult in good time, and accomplished that which, without him could only have been attained through bloodshed and the greatest disorders. You would first have had a Government restricted to the patricians, and then an unbridled popular Government, which must have given rise to disturbances and the shedding of blood; probably ending in the return of Piero de’ Medici. Savonarola alone had the wisdom, from the outset, to arrest the coming storm by liberal measures (p. 28, and *passim*). But in his *Storia di Firenze*, Guicciardini becomes almost a *Piagnone*. He speaks in the warmest terms of praise of the prudence, the political and practical genius of the friar; calls him the saviour of his country, and so eloquent are his words, that, as we cannot give the whole passage, we will not deprive them of their lustre by a bare statement of their meaning.

In our day, it is true that some have begun to throw discredit on Savonarola as a politician; and when other means have failed, they hold him up to ridicule, and always pass judgement upon him with levity. But

there are also modern writers who, after serious examination of the evidence, have arrived at a conclusion similar to that of the older authors: and if among the modern political writers of Florence we may venture to select one whom we may quote immediately after the great Italians, there can be little doubt that that one must be Francesco Forti; whom a premature death alone prevented from establishing that world-wide reputation of which he gave the early promise. For he who has exhibited a truly wonderful degree of penetration on questions of public law and on the institutions of his country, thus speaks of Savonarola: ‘The reforms introduced by the friar constituted, perhaps, the most just Government that Florence had ever enjoyed, while it was a Republic. It is unquestionable that all the most eminent men in Florence were in favour of a popular form of government up to the year 1530, and all of them were devoted to the opinions held by Savonarola. The Italian history of the fifteenth century can boast of few men greater than him, and, perhaps, of no one so great in the political history of the Florentine Republic.’ (Forti, *Istituzioni Civili*.) It seems to us that it would be superfluous to swell this note by other quotations; for the facts themselves supply abundant evidence.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROPHECIES AND PROPHETIC WRITINGS OF SAVONAROLA.

HE who, after reading the events described in the preceding chapter, would infer the effect they must have produced on the mind of Savonarola, might be led to a conclusion very far from the truth. Everyone might expect to find him, if not proud of his work, rejoicing at least in the success he had obtained, in the great benefit he had conferred on the people. But it is only necessary to read the sermons he preached at this time to discover how greatly his mind was oppressed by sadness. At the very time of his power over the people from the pulpit, who worshipped his very gestures, while the whole city was submissive to his will, he was very far from giving himself up to any joyfulness. He foresaw a dismal future; and tried, but in vain, to dispel the mournful image. ‘I am wearied, O Florence, by my four years of unceasing discourses, which have done nothing more than exhaust myself, while labouring for you. In addition to this, I have been afflicted by the thought, never absent from my mind, of the scourge that I see approaching, and by the fear and alarm of the dangers to which it will expose you. I therefore pray to the Lord continually in your behalf.’* It is very true that the great promises and the brilliant hopes which he held out to Florence were always conditional: ‘If you do not turn unto the Lord, the joyful

* The twenty-third sermon on Haggai.

will be changed into sorrowful auguries.' The people had been made so inveterately evil-disposed, that the future of Italy, the future of the Church, and his own future, appeared in his eyes to be fraught with dangers and with constantly increasing sorrows.

These sad presentiments seem to have become more vivid at the very time one would have thought that his mind would have acquired more serenity and contentment. After having passed triumphantly through the first political struggle, after having carried the law establishing a popular form of Government by the Consiglio Maggiore, at the very time when all the people, in a state of ecstasy, flocked to listen to him, and were almost expecting him to give out a hymn of glory to God, he began one of his accustomed allegories, setting forth the sadness of his mind, and foretelling his own violent death, of which he seems never to have had any doubt: 'A young man, leaving his father's house, went to fish in the sea; and the master of the vessel took him, while he went on fishing, far into the deep sea, from whence he could no longer descry the port; whereupon the youth began to utter lamentations. O, Florence, that sorrowful youth is now before you in this pulpit. I left my father's house to find the harbour of religion, taking my departure when I was twenty-three years old, in pursuit only of liberty and a quiet life, two things I loved beyond all others. But then I looked upon the waters of this world, and began, by preaching, to gain some courage; and finding pleasure therein, the Lord led me upon the sea, and has carried me far away into the great deep, where I now am, and can no longer descry the harbour. *Undique sunt angustiae* (shoals are on every side). I see before me the threatening tribulations and tempests, the harbour of refuge left behind; the wind carrying me forward into the great deep. On my right,

the elect calling upon me for help; on my left, demons and the wicked tormenting and raging. Over, above me, I see everlasting goodness, and hope encourages me thitherward; hell I see beneath me, which, from human frailty, I must dread, and into which, without the help of God, I must inevitably fall. Oh, Lord, Lord, whither hast thou led me? That I might save some souls to Thee, I am myself so fixed that I can no more return to the quiet I left. Why hast Thou created me to live among the contentions and discords of the earth? I once was free, and now I am the slave of everyone. I see war and discord coming upon me from every side. But do you, O my friends, you the elect of God, have pity upon me. Give me flowers, for, as is said in the Canticle, *quia amore langueo* (because I languish through love). Flowers are good works, and I wish for nothing more than that you should do that which is acceptable to God, and save your own souls.' So great was his agitation in this sermon that he was obliged to pause, saying, 'Now let me have some rest in this tempest.'

'But what,' he said, resuming his discourse, 'what, O Lord, will be the reward in the life to come to be given to those who have come victorious out of such a fight? It will be that which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,—eternal beatitude. And what is to be the reward in the present life? The servant will not be greater than his master, is the answer of our Lord. Thou knowest that after I had taught I was crucified, and thus thou wilt suffer martyrdom. Oh Lord, Lord,' he then exclaimed, with a loud voice that echoed through the whole church, 'grant to me this martyrdom, and let me quickly die for thy sake, as thou died for me. Already I see the axe sharpened. But the Lord says to me:—wait yet awhile, until that be finished which is to come to pass, and then thou shalt

show that strength of mind which will be given unto thee.' And then, resuming an explanation of a Psalm at the verse *Laudate Dominum quia bonus* (Praise the Lord for his goodness), he continued his discourse.*

It was one of those moments of which he used to say, 'An inward fire consumes my bones, and forces me to speak out.' He then was carried away by a kind of ecstasy in which the future seemed to open up before him. When this followed him into the solitude of his cell, he remained a long time the victim of visions, and was kept awake whole nights, until sleep, getting the better of him, brought refreshment to his wearied body. But, on the other hand, when this state of ecstasy took possession of him in the pulpit, in the presence of the whole people, there were no bounds to his exaltation; it exceeded all that words can describe; he became as it were the master over all his hearers, and carried them along with him in the same degree of excitement. Men and women of all ages and conditions, artisans, poets, philosophers, sobbed aloud, so that the walls of the church echoed the wailings. The individual who was taking down the words of the preacher, having had to stop, wrote: 'At this place I was so overcome by weeping that I could not go on.' Savonarola himself had to sit down from exhaustion; sometimes he was so much affected as to cause an illness that confined him to his bed for several days. His written sermons cannot convey any adequate idea of the eloquence of those moments; many of the words must have been missed in a report, and what remained can have none of the ardour with which they were uttered. We can the more readily believe in the high state of exaltation of the orator, in his extraordinary vehemence, and in what we may call the eloquence of his person and gestures,

* The nineteenth sermon on Haggai.

† Compendium Revelationum.

because the little that remains of the words which fell from his lips in those solemn moments hardly account for the great effect the discourse produced on the Florentine public, at that time the most cultivated in Europe.

If we impartially consider the life and doctrine of Savonarola, we shall in truth find that he had a most singular and inexplicable presentiment of his future fate, which gave an extraordinary power to his writings, to his sermons, and to his course of life. Setting aside all the specialities and accessories that attached to his many predictions, we cannot fail to be surprised that almost all the prophecies should have come to pass. We do not refer alone to that political acumen by which he sooner than any other person announced the coming of the French, the expulsion of the Medici, and the many other events that followed, that acumen which excited so much astonishment among the most shrewd statesmen of the time.* Nor do we dwell upon that

* Comines was persuaded that Savonarola was a true prophet, as we have already mentioned, and as we shall show hereafter; and in his memoirs he is continually expressing his admiration of him. Thus he says:—‘He predicted the arrival of the King, when no one else thought of it; he afterwards wrote and said things to myself that no one believed, and yet they were all verified.’ Nardi and an infinite number of his contemporaries call him a prophet: and Machiavelli himself, who, as we have said, was not one of those who best comprehended, or impartially judged, Savonarola, does not venture to deny, or to express any doubt of his prophecies, ‘because one ought never to speak of such a man but with reverence,’ adding, that, ‘numbers without end believed in them, because his life, his doctrine, the subjects that he took up, were sufficient to induce them to give full credit to him (*Discorsi sulle Deche*, lib. i. c. xi. p. 52, Italia, 1813). Guicciardini, who is perhaps the person who has pronounced the fairest judgement upon him, hesitates upon this question of prophecy, and says: ‘I look to time for the solution of these doubts; but if Savonarola was sincere, and the sanctity of his whole life justifies that belief, we have been witnesses in our time to a very great prophet; if he was not sincere, we have seen a very great man. It would have been impossible for him to have done the things he did, conduct them with such consummate art, with so much prudence, had he not been gifted with the rarest talent.’—*Storia Inedita di Firenze*.

The concluding sentence of this note is as follows:—‘We quote

constant, that ever-present presentiment of his own violent death, which he announced with a firmness of conviction altogether inexplicable and truly miraculous. But we would rather point to his having been the first to feel that a great re-organisation of the human race was about to take place; that the religious sentiment was about to be revived in the hearts of men to regenerate them; that after passing through sanguinary conflicts, society would recover its wonted vigour. If we closely examine his celebrated *Conclusions*, they will be found to admit of no other meaning. 'The Church will be renovated, but it must first be scourged, and that it soon will be.' He continually repeats: 'the infidels will be converted, Christianity will be triumphant over the whole earth; before long there will be but one sheep-fold and one shepherd;' he is confident that the human race is about to recover its lost unity, and that Christianity will become, ere long, the sole religion of all civilized nations. When we attentively study his works, we are truly astonished to see with what constancy, with what fixity of conviction, he repeats those conclusions, the certainty with which he seems, as it were, to see them verified. And when, at a late period, we find him describing, even to minuteness, the future calamities of Italy, and with such remarkable accuracy; when we see him worked up into a state of exaltation, throwing himself into such an agitation, and delirium of grief, in describing them, it is impossible for us to give any explanation of the facts; but still they are facts, and they are of a kind the most extraor-

this work from memory only, for it has not yet seen the light, having been allowed a hasty perusal of the MS. Its publication, which has been confided by the Counts Guicciardini to Signor Canestrini, will be of the highest importance.'—Three volumes have now been published by Barbera, in Florence (1862), and more are said to be forthcoming.—*Tr.*

dinary. The man sees the sad and mournful future of his country, and the sorrows present themselves to him with such a semblance of truth, that he himself already endures the affliction.

This is the prophetic character of Savonarola, if we may call it so, as it appears to us, when we look upon his whole life and all his predictions; keeping in view those only which may be considered to have a general importance, and setting aside all that is special and accessory in them. But when we turn to consider those parts, the aspect changes; and we must not omit an examination of this totally different phase in the character of the Friar. We shall by such examination see that there were united in him two entirely different natures: the one of which goaded him on to pry into the future, and the other made him fall back in to the past. Having already directed our attention to the first of those natures, we now take up the examination of the other.

The study of scholastics had had a great influence in the formation of Savonarola's character, and had produced a great tendency in him to run into subtleties and sophisms. From his childhood he had shown a strange passion for reading and studying the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, all that the author says on the co-operation of angels, on the nature of the prophets and their visions. He read and re-read over and over again the minute and subtle distinctions of the angelic doctor, at the same time studying the Old Testament and the Apocalypse: so that there was not a dream nor a vision of the prophets and patriarchs with which he was not familiar. Those subjects were the occupation of his youthful mind during entire days; they inflamed a fancy by nature very exalted, and his very nervous temperament was shaken and agitated to a degree impossible to describe. The dreams and visions

to which he had been liable from his childhood now multiplied, they crowded round his mind, and in the night he may be said to have been haunted by them. When he afterwards found that by reading the Bible and the Fathers, by his prayers and night watches, they increased upon him, he began to believe them to be inspirations from God, which came to him through the intervention of angels, in the manner that St. Thomas Aquinas says the prophets were inspired. From that time there was not one of his dreams, not one of his most strange imaginations, for which he did not find a parallel in the Bible, and which he set to work to scrutinise in accordance with the rules laid down by the angelic doctor. He passed whole nights on his knees in his cell, a prey to visions, by which his strength became more and more exhausted, his brain more and more excited, and he ended by seeing a revelation from the Lord in everything.

We have now another fact to mention, well deserving of consideration. Among the friars of St. Mark's was a certain Silvestro Maruffi, who had great influence on the destiny of Savonarola. It appears that this man, from some illness in his childhood, was subject to a novel kind of somnambulism, which visited him daily in the form of extraordinary visions and strange discourses. But far from assigning to them any mysterious or supernatural nature, he no sooner heard Savonarola begin to talk of revelations and predictions of the future than he reproved him, telling him that they were follies unworthy of a man of his gravity. To this Savonarola replied, with that look and that earnestness which gave him so great an ascendancy over other men, advising him to pray fervently to the Lord that he might make the truth of all those things clear to him. Maruffi, when near his death, and when he had not the

courage to defend his master, confesses distinctly—‘Either from bodily infirmity or from some other cause, it is certain that spirits appeared to me to rebuke me for not believing in him.’* This extraordinary somnambulism undoubtedly produced this effect, that it made such an impression on the mind of both friars, that from that day neither of them doubted for a single moment that the visions were in truth revelations from God. Savonarola began to entertain for Maruffi a regard and almost a respect that his scanty learning and weak flighty character did not at all deserve; he attached a blind faith to his sayings,† and thus, carried along from one error to another, he became more and more confirmed in the strange ideas he entertained about visions. And truly nature, chance, study, prayer, and everything else, seem to have contributed to goad

* This fact has now become clear and placed beyond all doubt, by the discovery we made of the second trial of Savonarola and of the trials of Salvestro and Domenico. Salvestro describes his visions, and confesses explicitly that the medical men showed them to be the effect of disease, adding, that when, for another malady, he lost eight pounds of blood, the visions altogether disappeared. The confessions of Domenico confirmed all that Salvestro had said, and the statements of the latter are further confirmed by the depositions of witnesses.

† The reading of the trials above mentioned is alone sufficient to demonstrate fully the truth of what we have now said. Domenico confesses that he and Savonarola placed great faith in what Maruffi told them; that once or twice they told him that they had themselves seen certain visions which Maruffi told them had come to him from angels, to be afterwards repeated to his two companions, and to be by them related to the people, as having happened to themselves. And Domenico, when on the point of death, persists in saying, that that was not only permitted but made obligatory upon them, it being the will of the angels. See the *Processo di Fra Domenico da Pescia dell' Ordine dei Predicatori, registrato per sua mano propria*. (Trial of the Friar Domenico of Pescia of the Order of Preachers, written by his own hand.) This very important document we discovered in the Riccardian library, codex 2,053, fo. cxxxi. retro. e seg.). It clearly proves the heroic strength of mind of Domenico, for while he confesses with the utmost ingenuousness his own superstition and that of Savonarola, he entirely removes all doubt as to their perfect sincerity. All the opinions we have expressed receive the fullest confirmation from those documents; but we were unable to avail ourselves of a recent publication issued from the Archives of Florence in their *Giornale Storico*, because it is in part

him on, as if against his will, to this dangerous propensity.

It is not possible to describe the blind faith he lent at this time to those visions, nor the extent to which he had become their slave. We find him sometimes discoursing upon them in a manner that would lead us to believe that he considered that in them the whole importance of his mission consisted. They were the object of his constant study, and of his serious meditations: he spent many long hours in showing in what manner the angels produce visions in the mind of man; how supernatural voices may be heard, and so forth. We find in his sermons, in his letters, everywhere, the ideas he had arrived at on this subject; but it is in his *Dialogo della Verità Profetica* (Dialogue on Prophetic Truth), published in 1497, that he has collected them together, giving them the form of a scientific treatise. We there see, with the clearest evidence, the ingenuous credulity of the friar, and the strange confusion they had created in his mind. We seek in vain to find out what was the precise conception he himself had of his prophecies and his prophetic mission; on the contrary, there seems to be a curious medley of opposite theories in his mind, upon none of which he could absolutely decide. Sometimes he would appear to predict future events by a process of simple reasoning; because a study of the Bible and a consideration of the corrupt state of the Church were enough to persuade any man of understanding that a scourge was near at hand.* At other times, he be-

apocryphal and in part incorrect, as may at once be seen by comparing it with the above-mentioned codex.

* Pico, in the 5th chapter of his *Life of Savonarola*, 'De divinis citra velamen revelationibus, quarum particeps factus Hieronymus futuras predixit clades' (On divine revelations made to Jerome, which predicted future misfortunes). He shows clearly in what way Savonarola, reasoning upon passages in the Bible, arrived at his *Conclusions*. Savonarola himself, in all his works, continually speaks of those natural reasonings by which the future was predicted, and very often he calls

believes that the future is made known to him by celestial visions, or by revelations coming to him direct from God, for the good of the Italian people. And this gift, according to him, is quite independent of his character as a good Christian; he is merely an instrument in the hand of God; and although he be a prophet, it does not follow that he will be saved. In accordance with this conception, which bears the mark of the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, he distinctly assumes the character of a prophet, and gave his visions the same explanation and the same importance that the angelic doctor and the Church give to those of the prophets. They come, he says, direct from God, and are imprinted by the angels on the intellect, and not on the affections, without having the effect of securing the salvation of the man.*

But in his works on the prophecies, an idea of an opposite nature often occurs, which, setting aside visions and puerile dreams, accounts for that marvellous instinct, or, as we might call it, divination of the future which no one can deny that Savonarola possessed; not, indeed, as an inspiration coming from God, independently of grace and salvation, but rather as a result and almost an essential part of that evangelical spirit which is a constituent of a true Christian. 'I am not,' he there says, 'either a prophet or the son of a prophet. I do not dare to assume that awful name; but I am certain that the things I announce will come to pass, because they spring from Christian doctrine, from the spirit of evangelical charity.† In truth, the

prophecy a part of wisdom. 'Inter alias partes prudentiæ, tres principales ponuntur; videlicet: memoria præteritorum, intelligentia præsentium, et providentia futurorum.' *Expositio Abachuch Prophetæ*, per Hieronymum de Ferrariâ; an unedited work, which we are going to publish.

* See the *Compendium Revelationum*; *Dialogo della Verità Profetica*; Sermon of March 27, 1496, among those on Amos; Sermons on Job.

† Sermons on Amos, fol. 40, and elsewhere; Firenze, 1497.

sins of Italy are your sins, by force of which I am a prophet, and which ought to make every one of you a prophet. Heaven and earth prophesy against you, but you neither see nor hear them. You are struck by mental blindness; you shut your ears to the voice of the Lord who calls you. If you had the spirit of charity, you would all see it as I see it, that the scourge is approaching.* And these various conceptions we meet with in his works on the least occasion; they come across one another, they are contradictory, and no one of them ever appears to be the dominant conception. This kind of contradiction we meet with constantly in his sermons; but it is more conspicuous in the work which treats specially on prophecies, and which deserves to be closely examined by whoever desires to become acquainted with this phase of Savonarola's mind.†

* *Epistola a certe divote Persone, &c.*, in Quetif, vol. ii. p. 181; *Prediche sopra l'Esodo*, Firenze, 1498, fol. 12; *Prediche sopra Amos*, fol. 39.

† We must here do Rudelbach the justice to say, that he was the first to notice that opposition in the two principal conceptions of Savonarola on the subject of prophecy. He came to his conclusions after a diligent examination of the author's works; but, as is his custom, he makes very arbitrary inferences from them. See a very long chapter in his biography, entitled *Ueber die Prophetische Gabe und die Prophezeiungen Savonarolas* (On the Prophetic Gift and the Prophecys of Savonarola). After having correctly stated the differences between the two conceptions, he refutes the first and exaggerates the second, in order to make out Savonarola to have been an evangelical prophet in a thoroughly Protestant sense; in other words, a prophet of the Reformation. He compares him with the Abbé Gioacchino; with St. Bridget and St. Catherine, all of whom, according to him, were more or less prophets of the Reformation.

Meier, although he too would make Savonarola a Protestant, endeavours to moderate the exaggerations of his countryman, who he admits was apt to give way too blindly to an unbridled fancy. He also points out the difference in Savonarola's two conceptions; would destroy one of them, and keep the other out of sight, almost persuading himself that Savonarola was neither a prophet nor believed himself to be one, but sought to interpret futurity by Scripture. Meier appears to have had a not very clear idea of that which he wishes to demonstrate, and supports his argument so coldly, with so little decision, that he neither convinces nor persuades, but only gives us trouble. Nevertheless, justice requires that due honour should be paid to these two Germans for having been

In his *Dialogo della Verità Profetica*, which we have referred to above, the conversation lies between himself and seven allegorical personages, who represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to whose various objections he replies. They begin by asking—Whether he never feigned to be a prophet, in order the more easily to persuade the people of the truth of the faith? To this he indignantly replies, that truth is one only, and that every falsehood is a sin, and it would moreover be a very grievous sin, should anyone try to deceive the people by bringing in the name of the Lord, and so make God himself an impostor. Another asks him—May it not be your arrogance, concealed under the garb of a false modesty? To this he answers, quoting the authority of St. Thomas Aquinas, a man would not be justified by such a gift; on what should I found my pride, my arrogance? A third adds, May it not be that, with perfect good faith, you deceive yourself? No, he replies, that is not possible; I know the purity of my intentions; I have worshipped the Lord in all sincerity; I seek to follow His footsteps; I have passed whole nights in prayer, I have sacrificed my peace, I have worn out health and life for the good of my neighbour. No, it is not possible that the Lord should have deceived me. His light is truth itself, His light helps my reason, directs my love.* And he runs on in this strain, maintaining, and with much eloquence, an idea entirely opposite to that which he had been expounding a few pages before.

the first to study the prophetic writings of Savonarola, and to have fully understood how necessary it was in a biography of the friar to submit them to a careful examination and exposition; instead of skipping over them, as almost all others have done.

* *De Veritate Prophetica*, Dialogues in lib. viii.—S.L.A. Another edition, with the date of Firenze 1497, has the title *De Veritate Prophetica*, libri seu dialogi ix. The difference between them consists in this, that the second has given the introduction as a dialogue. There is a third edition in Italian, of the same year, and a reprint of it at Venice in 1548.

To one of the interlocutors he had proved the truth of the light by which he was guided, by affirming that it was independent of grace ; and to another he wished to prove that it is almost the same thing with grace.

But that which more than anything else is deserving of consideration is the answer he gives when asked—What is the ground of your certainty for the reality of these your revelations? It is truly singular to find him struggling with himself amidst a thousand arguments, a thousand syllogisms, all pure sophisms, in order to demonstrate the truth of his revelations. It is a painful position for a man to be called upon to give a reason for being superior to reason ; to prove, by human arguments, that he is raised above humanity : Savonarola, without perceiving it, was treading on ground that might open a dangerous whirlpool under his feet. To demonstrate supernatural power there is but one unanswerable argument—a miracle. That might one day be demanded of him by the blind multitude, which, in its credulity, always goes farther and farther in extremes ; it might be demanded from him by his enemies, who again might turn it into a powerful weapon against him. But he was so blinded by his infatuation, that doubt never entered his mind ; it seemed to him that it would amount to ingratitude to God ; nor could he persuade himself that those who disbelieved him could do so in good faith.

He had written also another small work on the subject of prophecy, with the title of *Compendium Revelationum*, which was published in August 1495.* We

* It was published at the same time in Latin and Italian. *Compendium Revelationum*, *Impressit Florentiæ, Franc. Bonaccorsius*, 1494, *V. Nonas Mensis Octobris*. The same publisher printed it in Italian, August 18, 1495, and twelve years afterwards it was reprinted in Latin, at Paris and Florence, in 1537 at Venice, and again in Paris in 1674, edited by Quetif.

Not only Savonarola himself, but the greater number of his followers have left treatises on his prophecies. The chief were those of Beni-

there find a compendium of his principal visions, and many most important particulars relating to his life, some of which directly refer to the way in which he first began to prophecy, and to the struggle he had to keep up his courage to resist relating the visions he had seen, but which at last failed him. This work, when compared with the other works of Savonarola, is in very correct and almost elegant Latin; he describes some of the visions with a certain vigour of fancy, such as that of the sword of the Lord, mentioned in our account of the events in 1492, and another that he saw about the same time. There then appeared to him a black cross, planted in the very centre of Rome and reaching to the

vieni, in his letter to Clement VII., and in different tracts in which he expounds the doctrine of his master; that of Violi in his *Giornate* (Diaries). Frà Benedetto speaks of them in almost all his works, but most fully in the MS. in the Magliabechian library above quoted, *Secunda parte delle Profezie di Frà Girolamo*; and, not to mention an infinite number of others, the younger Pico and all the biographers speak diffusely of them. On this matter we must not omit to notice a work that still further confirms what we have stated in this chapter. Frà Benedetto wrote a book entitled: *Fons Vitæ* (MS. Magl. xxv. 96), in which he relates a long series of revelations and visions which he had had, amounting altogether to about seventeen. Between the fifteenth and sixteenth there is a paragraph entitled *Humilis excusatio prophetæ*, in which he says: ‘Hæc autem scripsimus, non quia firmiter vera esse credamus et quia sopniis fidem aliquam adhibeamus, sed quia sopnia aliquando non sunt spernenda; quum, sicut patet clarum in Scripturis, multa sopnia revelationes fuerunt. Scripsimus, etiam, ut cognoscamus an sint a naturâ an a Diabolo an a Deo; ut facta naturæ adiscamus, et illusiones Demonum vitemus, et ut Divinam Bonitatem cognoscamus et annumeremus. Obsecro omnes legentes, ut fidem certam hiis do (perhaps he should say *nec do*) nec dare decrevi, et sic protestor ante Deum et homines, et sunt sicut si ista non sopniassem. Solus Deus est, qui ab æterno novit, qui futura predicere possit. Et si aliqua ista significare inveneris, non mireris quia ego peccator sim; quum donum prophetiæ (teste sancto Thomâ) stat cum peccato mortali. Hæc etiam ratione non me justum et bonum existimes, quum ego infelix peccator sum, et multorum sum conscius peccatorum.’ It is certainly not a little remarkable that Frà Benedetto, after having called himself a prophet, should make this ingenuous confession, that he knew not whether these same visions were really dreams or revelations, the work of nature or of the devil. So true it is that neither Savonarola nor his followers had formed any clear conception on the matter, and that they were strongly inclined to take for revelations all illusions and dreams that had anything in them of a religious nature.

sky, on which was inscribed *Cruce iræ Dei*. (The cross of God's wrath.) The sky was troubled, fearful clouds were coursing through the air, the winds rushed, lightnings were mixed with darts, rain with fire and swords, and a vast multitude were dying. All of a sudden the vision changed; the sky became serene, and the black cross disappeared. Another rose from the centre of Jerusalem, which seemed to be of gold, which illuminated and spread joy over the world, and upon it was inscribed *Cruce misericordiæ Dei* (cross of the compassion of God), and from all parts of the earth the nations flocked to worship it. This vision had great renown among the people, and was published in the form of an engraving, and served as an illustration in the works of the friar. Its meaning, and the hopes of which he wished it to be considered as the symbol, were easily apprehended. But it is less easy to comprehend the meaning of another, in which he makes himself an ambassador from the Florentines to Jesus Christ; describes his long, strange, incomprehensible journey to Paradise, of which he gives a minute account, reports things said to him by various allegorical persons and by the Virgin, whose throne he describes, even to the number and quality of the precious stones with which it was ornamented. The mysterious journey concludes with a sermon to the Florentines by Jesus Christ, through the medium of Savonarola, in which all the doctrines of the friar are confirmed. This vision, which he described for the first time in a sermon he preached in May 1495, appears to have met with some criticisms and objections in the city, for we find him, in a letter *ad amicum deficientem* (to an erring friend)* complaining of it, and affirming that such talk could proceed only from calumny, 'because whoever had listened attentively to what I said would have been convinced that I never

* Quetif, tome ii. p. 209.

meant that I had been corporeally in Paradise, but that all was a vision of the imagination: for in Paradise there are neither trees, nor water, nor stairs, nor doors, nor chairs; therefore if they had not been malicious, they would easily have understood that all I represented was impressed on my mind through angelic agency.' No one can believe that such strange dreams were produced by the intervention of angels, but must at once refer them to a disordered fancy.

But the puerile nature of these visions afford a strong argument in defence of Savonarola against the accusations of insincerity and bad faith brought by many, who assert that, he added to the credulity of the populace in order the more easily to get power over them. Such an opinion would confuse every notion of his character, would reduce it to a state of chaos, and would render not only his great qualities but his gravest errors wholly inexplicable. How is it possible to believe that a man of the genius, the prudence, the experience of Savonarola, could be so unskilful, such a novice in the art of deception? If deception was his object, what need had he to scatter his fictions to the four winds? Was it necessary, in order to deceive the populace, that he should write abstruse and difficult treatises on visions; speak of them to his friends and to his mother; and write disquisitions upon them in the margins of his Bibles? * That which his impartial examiners would wish hidden, which a cunning duplicity might perhaps have led him to tell the people, but certainly never to print, he published and republished, and maintained with quotations from the Bible and St. Thomas Aquinas. Such, therefore, was the simplicity of his character, and it

* In his notes on his Bibles, in his letters to his mother, his brother, his friends, he expresses the same sentiments on the importance of his prophecies, and we find in them the same principles, the same opinions, the same contradictions.

is a fact well deserving of reflection ; thus to see a man who had acquired such power over a whole people, whose reputation for eloquence was spread over the world, who was the most original mental philosopher of that century, who gave Florence the best form of government she ever had ; to see such a man exulting that he had heard voices in the air, that he had seen the sword of the Lord, that he had been sent as an ambassador from Florence to the Virgin. This is a fact that history ought neither to conceal nor to change in a single feature, but ought to place in full light, so that it may become the subject of profound and philosophical meditation. It is a truly solemn sight to contemplate how signally Providence humbles the greatest men, by uniting faculties almost divine with such weaknesses as to remind us that they are still simple mortals.

Nor was this remarkable contrast ever more conspicuous than in the case of Savonarola, and in the age in which he lived. During that revival of the human race, the mental faculties seemed to have been in a state of exaltation, and life itself to have been in such a fever, that men could not escape from delirium. We have seen that the grave and solemn Marsilio Ficino changed the stone set in his ring from day to day, according to the state of his mind ; that in like manner he changed the claws and the teeth of various animals contained in his amulets, and lectured *ex cathedrâ* on their occult virtues. We have said how Francesco Guicciardini felt assured that he had had *experience of aerial spirits*, and how Christoforo Landino discovered in the stars the future of the Christian religion. From such things we come to the conclusion that the only difference between Savonarola and his most celebrated contemporaries amounts to this, that what he ascribed to religious and supernatural causes, philosophers and earnest thinkers attributed to oc-

cult powers. But if from the age in which those men lived we pass to that period of history to which the French have given the name of *Renaissance*, our wonder finds no limits. The dreams of Pomponaccio, of Porta, of Cardan,* leave those of the friar of St. Mark's far behind. These bold geniuses, who, through the occult sciences, were clearing the way for Galileo, seem to have been during their whole lifetime in a state of delirium. No one certainly would believe the stories of Cardan's dreams, if he had not told them himself in his biography, and no one after hearing them could give him credit for the powers of his mind, did not his own writings confirm his discoveries. His visions robbed science of half his time; a passing sound in his ear was the voice of his familiar spirit; and a wasp entering his room made him write a volume of predictions; to which he afterwards attached such faith that historians tell us he starved himself to death to prove the truth of one of them.†

Such were the men and such the times in which we find so many martyrs to religion, to science, and to liberty. On more occasions than one we have stated that unless Savonarola be placed at the head of the new era, his character cannot be rightly comprehended. When he mounted the pulpit to announce future events, he saw them with such a force of evidence that he seemed to

* POMPONACCIO or POMPONAZZI, born in 1462, was Professor of Philosophy at Padua, and died in 1526.—PORTA, born at Naples in 1550, died there in 1615. He was author of a work on Natural Magic; the author of his life in the *Biographie Universelle* says of him:—'Malgré les rêveries, les puerilités et les bizarreries dont fourmillent ses ouvrages, on ne peut nier qu'il n'ait rendu de grands services aux sciences physiques et naturelles.'—CARDAN was born at Pavia in 1501, and died in 1576.—TR.

† This last fact is asserted by De Thou. See Libri, *Histoire des Sciences Mathématiques*; Cardani, *De Vita propria*. As to Porta, one may see what Libri says of him, and what he says of himself, in his work on magic. See also Carriere, *Die Philosophische Weltanschauung der Reformationszeit*, Stuttgart, 1847.

cross the threshold of a new century ; so strong was his presentiment of it, that it had already begun with him. But, on the other hand, when he would reason upon and discuss his miraculous gift, the only explanation of which was to be found in the greatness of his own mind, he fell back into times past ; and, plunging into scholastics, was unable to comprehend his own nature. Thus we see in him, and in all in that age, the past and the future fiercely contending with each other. While the roots of the past still retain a firm grasp, but without the powers of vitality, the future, young and daring, asserts the world to be its own.

CHAPTER VII.

VARIOUS PARTIES BEGIN TO BE FORMED IN FLORENCE—SAVONAROLA PREACHES ON FESTIVAL DAYS ON THE PSALMS; IN LENT, HE BEGINS, BY A SERIES OF SERMONS ON THE BOOK OF JOB, A GENERAL REFORM OF MANNERS, AND OBTAINS GREAT SUCCESS—THE CONVERSION OF FRA BENEDETTO.

[1495.]

RESUMING our historical narrative, we must go back to the beginning of 1495, in order to trace the roots of those civic discords which, a little later, germinated, and revived parties in Florence. At that time there was one dominant opinion, one party only, that of the Friar, which went by the name of the Frateschi. Doubtless anyone looking closely into the state of matters could not fail to see that there existed great diversity of opinions. In the first place, there were those who, although they had a preference for a popular Government, had no sympathy either with friars generally or with Savonarola individually: they were few in number, and the bond of union among them was loose; they undoubtedly saw that the friar's measures were in favour of that liberty to which they were attached, and, in the councils, they usually voted with him and his adherents. By this, almost inoffensive, line of conduct they got the name of the *Bianchi* (the white party): another party, the *Bigi* (the greys), included a much larger number of the citizens, who were more united, and were much more dangerous; they were the partisans of the Medici, and having benefited by the general pardon

which had been granted by the intervention of Savonarola, they were outwardly favourable to him, and called themselves the friends of the popular Government; at the same time holding secret conferences, and keeping up a constant correspondence with Piero de' Medici, whose return they ardently desired. Although their secret dealings could not remain long undiscovered, they for a time kept concealed, and the Republic was thus fostering a serpent in its bosom. The Bigi were, in truth, the more dangerous, by reason of their underhand proceedings; and taking advantage of the generous reception they met with from Savonarola, and of the perfect good faith of his followers, they more easily brought about the ruin of their country. The well-disposed people, impressed by what they heard from Savonarola in his sermons, contented with the amnesty which had been granted, and with the liberty they had obtained, never dreamt of these dark deeds and secret plots; and when Savonarola warned them from the pulpit to be on their guard, because persons were at work to overthrow their liberties and establish despotism, they thought that he exaggerated from overzeal for the common weal, and they declared that there were no longer any friends of the Medici in Florence.

The popular party kept watch over other and more open enemies, the partisans of the oligarchy, those whom we have seen struggling so hard at the outset of the formation of the new Government. These were men belonging to opulent families, who had had much experience in public affairs, from having been employed by the Medici; they had many friends and connections possessing considerable influence at the Court of Rome, and more particularly at Milan, where The Moor, who cordially hated both the Republic and Piero de' Medici, gave them every assistance in his power. Their object

was to get the Government into their own hands, and establish a kind of aristocratic Republic, as it had existed in the time of the Albizzi. They had, therefore, a thorough hatred of the Medici, whom, so far from pardoning, as Savonarola had done, they would have persecuted with exile, confiscation, or death. They no less hated the friends of the popular Government; but against the friar, whom they looked upon as the sole cause of their defeat, and against his followers, whom they contemptuously called *Piagnoni* (Mourners), they were furious, and for that reason, they themselves were called the *Arrabbiati* (the rabid or infuriated).* They had, in fact, all that ancient restless party-spirit, which seemed to be the natural growth of Florence, and which Savonarola alone had been able to curb; consequently he was all the more hateful to them.

They would willingly have hazarded any attempt, and have ventured upon any resolute deed; but their power was still feeble, and their number small. And, in truth, when the new constitution was carried, the position of the *Arrabbiati* had become a very difficult one. To oppose the popular Government openly was impossible; for they would have had against them the *Bianchi*, the *Piagnoni*, and, more than both of those, the *Bigi*, who knew full well, that under the Government of the *Arrabbiati* they could neither expect pardon nor have any kind of hope.† In this state of things the *Arrab-*

* These same names at the time of the siege of Florence (1527-30) obtained different meanings. Thus *Piagnoni* and *Arrabbiati* were then the friends of a popular Government, and the latter of those designations was specially applied to those who were the most earnest in their attachment to that Government.

† 'And whosoever liked a popular Government wished that it might be that introduced and favoured by that friar. Many of the friends of the past Government of the Medici voluntarily joined them, in order to secure themselves against the appetite for revenge in their opponents; a danger to which they would have been much more exposed under the government of a single person, if by the evil fortune of our city a new government by a single person had been established.'

biati thought it wiser to appear to be friends of the popular Government, or at least to tolerate it, and to concentrate all their hatred upon Savonarola, whom they knew to be its very soul and support. They consequently sought by all sorts of arguments to throw ridicule upon his visions and prophecies; said that it was no business of a friar to meddle with affairs of state, and represented his charges against the Roman Court as monstrous and libellous. They hoped by this means to draw off the Bianchi and the Bigi from him and his followers; and, by attacking a single man, to defeat a party.*

They commenced their attack upon him as early as the beginning of the year 1495, when the twenty Accoppiatori, after much disagreement among themselves, had elected Filippo Corbizzi as Gonfaloniere, a man wholly unfit to be at the head of a Government, having little regard for the people, and still less for Savonarola.† The Arrabbiati sided with him, and found him a very docile instrument for carrying out their plans.‡ He one day took the unusual step of calling a Council in the Palazzo of theologians and masters in divinity,

Nardi, *Storia di Firenze*, ediz. Arbib., p. 66. See also the *Giornate* of Violi, in Razzi, Cod. Riccardi, 2012.

* 'So that many differences and contrarieties arose between the 'one and the other, and between the higher classes and the mass of 'the people; but care was taken to dissemble the reasons for the 'differences from both sides. They began to oppose the friar more 'openly, because of the diversity of opinions entertained about his 'prophecies. There were men who were not at all ashamed to dispute 'freely on the question of credulity, while they would have been 'ashamed to appear not to admire, or make it be believed that they did 'not admire, a popular form of government rather than that of any 'single person.' Nardi, p. 65, and in another place: 'Nevertheless, 'while many of the principal citizens were far from being satisfied 'with this form of government, they dissembled the true reason (as we 'have said above) and cunningly opposed the above named Frà Girolamo, as the person who had been its chief strength.'—Idem, p. 88. See also Violi.

† Nardi, p. 82. Ammirato, *Storia di Firenze*, lib. xxvi.

‡ Burlamacchi, p. 69, and following.

Abbots, Priors, and the Canons of Lorenzo, and of the Duomo; Marsilio Ficino was also invited, who, although an admirer of the doctrine of Savonarola, was wholly a partisan of the Medici.* They were no sooner assembled than the Gonfaloniere informed them, that he had a charge to bring against the Friar for intermeddling in the affairs of State; and they had proceeded but a little way in the discussion when Savonarola, wholly unconscious of what was passing, or what was intended, entered the apartment, accompanied by his faithful friend Frà Domenico of Pescia. He had scarcely crossed the door when he found himself assailed by the mob of theologians, hurling furious invectives against him. The most violent of all was a Dominican monk of Santa Maria Novella, who had the reputation of being a great theologian, but who from his diminutive figure, and being very fiery and acute in arguing, went by the nickname of the *Garofanino* (the spicy little fellow). Taking his text from the words of the Apostle *Nemo militans Deo implicat se negotiis secularibus*,† he made a speech full of invective against Savonarola, who, when all the

* Burlamacchi, idem. Ficino thus spoke of Savonarola, and his predictions: ‘Nonne, propter multa delicta, postremum huic urbi, hoc autumno (September and October, 1494), exitium imminabat, nullâ prorsus hominum virtute vitandum? Non divina clementia, Florentinis indulgentissima, integro ante hunc autumnum quadriennio, nobis istud pronunciauit per virum sanctimoniâ sapientiâque præstantem, Hieronymum ex ordine prædicatorum, *divinitus* ad hoc electum? Nonne *præsagiis monitisque divinis* per hunc impletis, certissimum jam jam supra nostrum caput imminabat exitium, quod, nullâ prorsus virtute nostrâ, sed præter spem mirabiliter vitavimus? *A Domino factum est istud, et est mirabile in oculis nostris.* Reliquum est, optime mi Johaannes, ut deinceps salutaribus tanti viri consiliis obsequentes, non solum ego atque tu, sed omnes etiam Florentini Deo nobis clementissimo grati simus, et publicâ voce clamemus: Confirma opus hoc, Deus, quod operatus es in nobis.’ Letter to Giovanni Cavalcanti, December 12, 1494.—See Marsilii Ficini, *Opera*; Basilea, vol ii. p. 962.

† ‘No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.’—2 Timothy ii. 4.—Tr.

others had spoken, rose with great calmness and said, ‘In me you see verified the saying of our Lord, “*Filii matris mee pugnauerunt contra me,*”* but truly it grieves me to see my fiercest adversary wearing the dress of St. Domenick. That very dress ought to remind him that our founder himself was in no small degree occupied with the affairs of this world; and that from our Order have gone forth a multitude of religious men and saints, to take a part in the affairs of State. The Florentine Republic cannot have forgotten Cardinal Latino, San Pietro Martire, Santa Caterina of Sienna, nor Sant’ Antonino, all of whom belonged to the order of St. Domenick. A religious man is not to be condemned for occupying himself with the concerns of that world in which God has placed him, but only if he should do so without regard to the higher purpose, without keeping in view the interest of religion. I defy anyone to point out a single passage in the Bible condemnatory of our showing favour to a free Government, which is to promote the triumph of morality and religion;’ and he thus concluded: ‘You will easily find that religion ought not to be treated of in profane places, and that theology is not a fit subject for discussion in the Palazzo.’ The assembly of theologians were so confounded by his speech that no one of them ventured a reply, but one cried out in a rage, ‘Come, tell us without disguise, do you aver that your words come from God, or do you not?’ Savonarola replied, ‘That which I have said, I have said openly; and I have nothing to add.’ And so this extraordinary meeting broke up.†

His adversaries having been thus defeated and put to shame, he continued his preachings; exerting his utmost power to bring about conciliation, and to calm and extin-

* ‘My mother’s children were angry with me.’—Song of Solomon, i. 6.—TR.

† Burlamacchi, p. 69 and following.

guish party spirit. Sometimes he chose for his subject a general pacification, at another time he pointed out the advantages of the Consiglio Maggiore. One day we find him in the pulpit enthusiastically drawing a parallel between the various steps in the progress of the formation of the new Government and the seven days of the Creation;* on another comparing it to the hierarchy of the Angels.† ‘Continue this reform,’ he was constantly saying, ‘proceed in the way on which you have entered, and you will receive the blessing of the Lord.’ In the last discourse he delivered on Haggai, he said that the Lord would give a new chief to the city of Florence, and after keeping his audience for some time in suspense on the meaning of what he had said, he concluded, ‘The new Chief I speak of is Jesus Christ, and he will be your King.’ He then proceeded to describe how great their happiness would be in having no other chief, no other guide than Him, and the prosperity that would accrue to all. O, Florence, thou shalt then be rich in good things, temporal and spiritual; thou shalt then be the reformer of Rome, of Italy, and of all lands; thou shalt spread the wings of thy greatness over the whole world.‡

In this way, amidst the indescribable enthusiasm of the people, he in this Advent finished his discourses on Haggai, in which politics and religion are so closely and strangely intermingled, that they remain an enduring monument of the history of the time, and of the various passions by which the mind of the friar was agitated. He on that day asked leave of his hearers to pause in his preachings, for he had need of rest; but that rest was of short duration, for in January, 1496, we find him again in the pulpit, engaged with his sermons on the Psalms, which he continued on all the festival days

* Eighteenth Sermon on Haggai.

† First Sermon on the Psalms.

‡ Twenty-second Sermon on Haggai.

before Lent. There were seven of these sermons, all very long, and both in matter and form very like those on Haggai,* except that we clearly see in them signs of the civic discords, and of that contest which he already had to sustain with the Arrabbiati. ‘O, ungrateful Florence, ungrateful people! I have done for you that which I would not have done for my own brothers, in whose behalf I have ever refused to solicit one single prince of this world. And now that which I have done for you brings upon me the envy both of the clergy and the people.’ †

Among these sermons on the Psalms, one preached on January 13, and entitled, a Sermon on the Renovation of the Church, Savonarola, taking as his text the celebrated words heard by him in his vision, *Ecce gladius Domini super terram cito et velociter* (Behold the sword of the Lord coming upon the earth instantly and swiftly), explained his whole sentiments on Renovation. He began by maintaining that all future and contingent events are known only to God: consequently astrology, which pretends to predict the future, by observing the stars, is false, for it is contrary to all the rules of faith, and to all the principles of science. After having refuted astrology at some length by similar arguments, he comes to speak of prophetic light, ‘which by divine communications enables us to know the future, but without man being

* *Prediche del Rev. P. Frate Hieronimo, fatte sopra diversi Salmi e Scritture in S. M. del Fiore*, beginning on the day of the Epiphany, and continued on the other festival days, collected by Lorenzo Violi, Firenze, 1496, and Bologna, 1515. As we have already mentioned, the first seven of these sermons form a continuation of those upon Haggai; the eighth is addressed to some nuns, and treats of monastic vows, then follow seventeen, which may be considered as a continuation of those on Job, preached in Lent. These are very long, and form a thick volume. To them are added some sermons of Frà Domenico of Pescia, which we shall advert to hereafter. In several editions of these sermons they have been mutilated, such as those of Venice of 1517 and 1543.

† A Sermon on the Psalms, preached January 11, 1495 (new style).

justified thereby; an example of which we have in Balaam, who, while he was a prophet was also a sinner.' He expounds the various ways by which the future may be made manifest, and arrives at last at his visions. 'These I have had,' he says, 'from my youth upwards, but it was at Brescia that they first became clear to me. The Lord sent me from thence to Florence, which is the heart of Italy, because there the reformation of all Italy has begun.'

Following up these general premises he proceeds to discourse on the necessity of a scourge and of regeneration. He first points to natural reasons: which are the oppression of the elect, the perversity of sinners, the longings of the good; and, proceeding thus, he comes at last to the conclusion that the opinion of their necessity is universal. 'You must perceive that everything seems to announce a scourge and tribulations. You must perceive that it appears just to everyone that we deserve punishment for our great iniquities.' He calls to their recollection that the Abbe Gioacchino had also predicted that there would be a regeneration at this time; he brings forward a vast number of parables to demonstrate the great probability of a coming scourge, repeats instances without end of the diversity of visions, concluding with his own. He dwells chiefly on that of the sword drawing near to the earth and on that of the two crosses which he saw raised up in Rome and Jerusalem. It would be impossible to give an idea of the force of his expressions, of the vividness of his descriptions, of the works of his imagination, of the confidence of his faith, that the visions came from heaven. He repeated the words from heaven he had heard pronounced by invisible beings;* his deep

* Here are some of the words: — 'Audite omnes habitatores terræ, hæc dicit Dominus: Ego Dominus loquor in zelo sancto meo: ecce dies veniet et gladium meum evaginabo super vos. Convertimini, ergo, ad me antequam compleatur furor meus. Tunc enim, angustia superveniente, requiratis pacem et non invenietis.' (Hear all ye

and solemn voice was re-echoed from the vaulted roofs of the temple, it descended like a divine manifestation on the people, who were roused to a state of ecstasy, and who trembled with terror, wonder and delight. All men were then much given to belief in supernatural things, and there was thus between the orator and his audience an interchange of ideas, a kind of magnetic attraction, in which it would have been difficult to find where the chief power lay; they were excited, and drawn into a state of feverish exaltation which we cannot easily either describe or comprehend.

But in demonstrating the necessity of a scourge, Savonarola did not restrict himself to arguments such as those above stated; he resumed the subject rather to show the reasons for it to be derived from the Holy Scriptures. ‘The prophet Daniel has declared that Antichrist will come to persecute the Christians in Jerusalem; it is therefore necessary that the Turk should be converted. And how can they be converted unless the Church be reformed? St. Matthew says that the Gospel will be preached in all the world; but who is now able to do this? Where are good preachers and good pastors to be found?’ And, continuing in this strain, he concluded—‘You thus see that Scripture and revelation, natural reason and universal agreement, announce to you that the scourge is at hand. O Italy! O ye princes! O ye prelates! the anger of God is coming upon you, and there is no safety for you unless you be converted to the Lord. O Florence! O Italy! your sins have brought adversity upon you. Repent, that the sword be not drawn from the scabbard while it is yet bloodless; unless you do this, no power, no wisdom, no strength will avail

inhabitants of the earth, thus saith the Lord—I the Lord speak in my holy zeal: behold the day cometh when I shall draw my sword from its scabbard upon you: be therefore converted ere my wrath be fulfilled. Even then, in returning tribulations, ye will ask for peace, but shall not find it.)

you. Hear, then, my last words: I have revealed to you everything with reasons both divine and human; I have implored you: command you I cannot, for I am your father and not Lord over you. Do then thy duty, Florence; nothing remains for me to do but to pray the Lord to enlighten thee.*

This sermon was immediately printed, and published, and was spread all over Italy, both by friends and foes of Savonarola; the former eager to let his eloquence and his doctrine be known, the latter to show his audacity, and rouse the anger of the Italian princes and of the Pope against him. In the hands of the Arrabbiati it was a most useful weapon for moving the indignation of Borgia. They were successful; for about the end of the same month of January an order came to Savonarola from Rome, commanding him to go and preach in Lucca.† There was nothing they did not hope to accomplish with a friendly Signory, and the Friar removed to a distance. He immediately got ready to set out at the appointed time, that he might give no pretext for evil reports. He, however, delivered four more sermons, in the first of which he strongly charged the people to persevere in the formation of the new Government, at the same time recommending charity, peace, and union. In another he dwelt upon the importance of simplicity and good habits of life, admonishing them to lay aside all superfluous things and give them to the poor, and impressing this duty first upon the convents; and, so soon as the Government should succeed in obtaining permission from Rome to that effect, his own convent should be among the first to set the example. ‘I have never found any part of the Gospel

* Sermon on Regeneration. It is the third of those on the Psalms; but it was also printed separately.

† Nardi, Pitti, Violi and others, relate over and over again, that the first orders from Rome were obtained at the instance of the Arrabbiati and The Moor.

recommending crosses of gold and precious stones ; I have only found goodness recommended : I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink, I was hungry and ye gave me no food. If you obtain permission to me from Rome, I, for my part, will surrender all, even to the giving away of my cloak.* In the last two sermons† he took leave of the people, saying that he must yield to the storm against him. ‘I must go to Lucca, and perhaps from thence to some other place, according to orders I may receive : pray to the Lord that he may help me to preach his doctrine. There are many in this city who would put me to death, but know ye, that mine hour is not yet come. I go because it is my duty to obey orders, and I wish to avoid giving rise to any scandal in our city. You, the elect of the Lord, do you persevere in prayer and in charity ; be not afraid of scourges nor of tribulations, for they always persecute the good, but be stedfast in well-doing.’ Having said this, he came down from the pulpit, amidst the agitation and grief of his followers.

If, however, the Signory, under the influence of the Gonfaloniere Corbizzi were hostile to the Friar, the *Dieci di libertà e pace* showed themselves most favourable to him. Knowing that they were supported in their opinion by that of the whole people, they wrote to Rome, earnestly imploring the Holy Father that he would allow Savonarola to preach in Florence during the coming Lent, notwithstanding the order he had received to go to Lucca.‡ The whole city was in a

* Fifth Sermon on the Psalms.

† Sixth and seventh Sermons, preached on the 20th and 25th of January.

‡ It was on January 8, 1495, that they addressed the following letter to the ambassadors.—‘ You will receive with this a letter directed to his Holiness in the Lord, praying that Friar Hieronimo of Ferrara, who is here the Prior of St. Mark’s, may preach in Florence during the ensuing Lent, notwithstanding the instruction given to him to go to preach in Lucca. And in order that the letter may not be thrown aside, it is indorsed, *Pro Fr. Hieronymo*. Let it be presented as soon as possible, and do what you can to obtain a brief directed to Frate

state of commotion, so soon as it was reported that the Friar was going away; many looked upon it as a sign that the popular Government was at an end, and letters of all kinds were received at Rome soliciting the Pope to recall the order he had given. Borgia, indeed, had not as yet any very strong reason for hating Savonarola: few at Rome knew, and fewer still cared for, his denunciations of evil habits, his visions and predictions. Besides, King Charles was a friend both of the Friar and of the Florentines, and he was then in the kingdom of Naples at the very height of his fortune, whilst the Pope was no way inclined to make him his enemy. For all which reasons, he was easily induced to yield to the suit of the Florentines, and revoking his brief, he granted permission to Savonarola to preach in Florence during Lent.*

But this apparently unimportant event made a deep impression on the mind of the Friar, which he could never forget, and which gave a new turn to his ideas.† He was strongly affected by the order to go to preach at a distance from Florence; but obedience was, in his view, a sacred duty, and no consideration whatever would have induced him to disobey the command. But what was he to think, when he saw the Pope make so little account of his own briefs, to issue and then recall

‘Hieronymo, which shall authorise him to preach here this year, as ‘asked.’—*Archivio delle Riformagioni, Lettere dei Dieci*. This letter is published by Meier, p. 80, note 2.

* ‘Respecting which (namely, the Friar’s departure), the opinions of ‘the greater number of men underwent a considerable change, inas- ‘much as the wisest among the magistrates and the people generally ‘were of opinion that his sermons were very useful for the correction of ‘manners, and were necessary to pacify the discord prevailing among ‘the evil-disposed citizens at the outset of the new government. For ‘which considerations, and by means of the urgency of many of his ‘devoted followers, and especially of the *Dieci di libertà e pace*, the ‘Pope recalled the above-mentioned brief, and thus it had been easily ‘obtained.’—Nardi, p. 65.

† He himself, at a late period, speaks of this impression in his sermons.

them at the desire of the last person who might solicit him? It was now evident that the brief had been granted to please the enemies of the Friar, those who had already begun to lay all sorts of snares for him. What weight then could he attach to a command which the Pope himself treated so lightly? Would it have been his duty to obey had he known this with certainty from the first? But he rejected all such considerations as importune temptations, and immediately applied himself to the duty of preaching the Lent sermons. He took the book of Job as his subject, as if to show that it was becoming in him to give a proof of patience, and he abstained, as much as possible, from all allusions to the affairs of State, in order not to give a new handle to his enemies. There was another reform not less useful, and of a not less political necessity, *the reform of the manners of the people*, and to this he directed himself with his whole soul, in his sermons on Job. They have come down to us in a less perfect state than those on Noah's ark. They were collected in a very incomplete way, almost in fragments, by a person who every now and then mentions that from agitation of mind he was continually obliged to stop. They were afterwards translated into Latin and re-translated into Italian, in which last form they were published, for the first time, at Venice, in 1545.

To lead a good life, and to live in unity and concord with each other, were the chief admonitions to the citizens in these sermons. From the beginning he set out by affirming that all might be saved, provided they would, in all sincerity, live a good life. 'We have none of us any excuse, my brethren; rectitude brings us nearer to the Lord, and the Gospel supplies a help to us in our weakness.'* All these sermons end, as they began, with the importance of leading a good life. He discourses on

* Second Sermon on Job.

friendship, and after treating on the various kinds and qualities of it, he concludes thus : ‘That only deserves the name, and is truly firm and durable, which is founded on a good course of life—on honesty and virtue.’* When discoursing on the essence of liberty, he arrives at a similar conclusion : ‘God is essentially free, and a just man is accordingly free. True liberty, that which alone is liberty, consists in a determination to lead a good life. A religious man may appear to you not to be a free man, because he submits his will to that of another man ; but he has far more liberty than the man who is given up to worldly things, for he does exactly whatever others require of him. What sort of liberty can that be which is subject to be tyrannised over by our passions ? Well, then, to come to the purpose of this discourse, do you, Florence, wish for liberty ? Do you, citizens, wish to be free ? Then, above all things, love God, love your neighbour, love one another, love the common weal. When you shall have this love and this union among you, then you will have true liberty.†

The next subject to which, as we have said, these sermons constantly refer is, the importance of a cordial union among the citizens. ‘Florence, I charge you ‘to be an united people, if you will be freed from ‘your afflictions. And were you to reply to me that ‘you are united, I must inform you that you lie. If ‘you persist in saying that union exists among you, I say ‘that you lie, and a second and a third time I tell you ‘that you lie. If you had been united, that which I had ‘promised to you would by this time have come to pass. . ‘Be therefore united ; if you wish to receive strength ‘and power from God, the material must be so disposed ‘as to be fit for their reception, and that disposition is ‘union, which thou, Florence, hast not. Where there

* The third Sermon on Job.

† The fourteenth Sermon on Job.

‘is union there God will be ; and where God is, strength and every good thing will be found.’* These words he continually represents as spoken by the Lord, and by Him to the Florentine people. It would appear that having from prudential considerations determined to abstain from politics, he surrendered himself more entirely to his visions. One entire sermon is on the light of prophecy ; † in another he divides the world into two armies ; the one of the wicked, under the command of the devil ; the other of the good, under the command of Jesus Christ ; he proposes that the elect should form a league with Christ, and offers to go himself as ambassador to Him. In the following sermon he gives an account of the conversations he had during that strange embassy, with the Virgin and Jesus Christ ; and in them also the chief subject was the importance of concord and of leading a good life. Jesus says to Savonarola, ‘Look to natural things ; which lead, step by step, to that unity in which the perfection of their nature consists. All the motions of material things resolve themselves into the heavenly motions ; as the motions in our bodies resolve themselves into that of the heart ; and the motions of the mind into that of our reason ; and all is regulated and governed by God, the prime mover in the Universe. See what happens when the constituent parts of a thing are separated ; we can no longer say that it exists ; and in order that it return to a state of existence, there must be a power to re-constitute its unity. If it had been possible for me to show all my power and goodness in one single creature I would have created one ; but for the sole reason that no one thing could have been capable of so much, I have multiplied the number of created things, all which united represent one greater and more extended unity. Look into the whole of nature and you will find that every existence desires its proper

* The thirteenth Sermon on Job.

† The twelfth Sermon on Job.

unity ; every created thing strives after this unity, except this people of Florence, whose whole object is separation and division.’ In the continuation of the same discourse, he comes to treat of what is meant by ‘leading a good life.’—Goodness—and it is still the Lord he represents as speaking,—Goodness is by its nature diffusive, and therefore I myself, who am the chiefest good, am spread over all creation ; I have given existence to all created things ; in whom every good is a participation of that goodness which is in me. To effect this, I descended from heaven to mix with men ; I became as a man ; I was nailed to the cross. This then shall be the sign by which you shall know who is good : when a man bestows his goodness upon others, and enables them to participate in that which is in himself, then is he good and partakes of the goodness that is in me. ‘But if, ‘on the contrary, you see men who do not diffuse and ‘allow others to partake of the talents which I gave them, ‘it is a clear sign that they in no degree share that ‘goodness which is in me. A Christian life does not ‘consist in ceremonies, but in being good ; and he who ‘is really good cannot refrain from showing that goodness. To be good implies that a man shall be compassionate and tender-hearted ; and therefore I say unto ‘every one, let him be of what condition he may, that ‘by this ye shall know whether a man be good — if he ‘be compassionate and give his good things to others, ‘and especially to the poor. And in this the Christian ‘religion consists, for it is founded on love and charity.’*

A reform of the habits of the people was the constant object of all these sermons, which was of much more importance at this time than the political reform, which was now going forward. True it is that these discourses are full of visions, of allegories, of extraordinary interpretations of the Bible, and they appear

* The sixteenth Sermon on Job.

the more strange to us, as what we possess of them is only an inexact and incomplete compilation. Still, these remains to us of their outward garb present one uniform character; the whole object substantially being the inculcation of a good life and of unity. The following is an example of the mode of allegorising the Bible he practised during this season of Lent: ‘St. Mark relates that on the morning after the Sabbath-day, the three Marys came early to the sepulchre of Jesus with aromatic ointments to anoint the body of our Saviour. These three Marys represent the perfect, the proficient, and the incipient who seek after Jesus. As on another occasion in this Gospel, St. Mark says that they brought aromatic and odoriferous things, that is, the virtues, which would be pleasant to Jesus. They arrive at the sepulchre when the sun had risen.’ If you seek to find Jesus, and the sun of justice be within you, you will be enlightened, and will have your desire. But it is necessary that you walk uprightly, and that you labour for it, as by such labour you will be made perfect. Behold the three Marys who went forward, seeking to find the Lord, and see how in the end they received their consolation. And as they went they thought within themselves, ‘Who will remove the stone?’ And saying this, they came to the temple and saw that the stone had been taken away. Now the meaning of this is, that ye who in doing good are seeking after Christ, know Him not; He is in thee, and has removed from thee that stone of ignorance, and the light that has been revealed will say to thee, as the Angel said to Mary, ‘Jesus of Nazareth whom thou seekest has risen and is not here.’ ‘I know that ye seek after Christ; he is raised from the dead and is not here. Therefore seek after Christ in heaven; seek him neither among the things of the present life, nor in the things of this world; seek him among

‘things celestial, divine, and spiritual; leave off your
‘affections for things temporal. He is in heaven and
‘waits for thee there. O ye Christians, for what tarry
‘you here? Seek to arrive at that place where you will
‘meet your chief, for there your felicity will be found.
‘“Come and see,” said the Angel to Mary; come and
‘see there, in the sepulchre, that Christ is not there,
‘for he has risen from the dead. But go, advance from
‘virtue to virtue in the present life, if you desire to
‘find Christ hereafter.’* Thus concluded the Lent
sermons on Job, the last of them being left to us, like
many others, with many blanks, caused by the agitation
of the person who noted them down.†

After this Lent service, Savonarola appeared to be quite broken and overpowered by fatigue, and although his wonted energy was still to be read in the vigour of his look and the fire of his eyes, he was emaciated to an extraordinary degree, his strength was visibly exhausted, and this weakness was aggravated by an internal complaint. His life during the latter years had been too much one of continual conflict, in a state of exaltation beyond that which human strength could maintain; and the political struggles had worn him far more than he himself believed. Not only had he to reflect, to reason, to give advice continually, to direct those rapid changes which were taking place day after day, but he had had almost the entire weight upon him of the destinies, the future hopes, of a whole people, who confided in him, and gave themselves up to his guidance. Hence, it became necessary to keep up his moral influence over them, to inspire his own mind into the multitude, to direct and sustain them by his will, and thus he was kept in

* The forty-fifth Sermon on Job.

† ‘So great was the anguish and weeping that came over me that I was obliged to stop.’ Thus wrote the Amanuensis at the end of the last sermon, and of many others delivered during Lent.

a constant state of tension, excitement, and fever. Such, however, was the indomitable courage of this friar, that the political struggles had scarcely ceased, ere he undertook a work of no less importance, his series of sermons on Job. To that work he gave his whole mind, as was indeed his habit in everything he undertook, with indescribable warmth of feeling, pertinacity, and determination. The language of these sermons is perhaps the least striking part of them, as they have come down to us in an imperfect state. In them he was discoursing on a subject he had more at heart than any other, and his physical weakness increased his moral exaltation; his eyes darted fire; his whole frame shook; his delivery was more than usual impassioned, but at the same time tender; and it may readily be excused, if he too often lost himself in his visions, when we consider his extraordinary excitement. There was in him such an expression of sincerity, goodness, and benevolence, that there never had been seen so great a multitude so entirely overcome by their feelings, for they sobbed aloud. At the conclusion of this Lent service Savonarola had obtained a still greater triumph than the political triumph he had earned by his sermons on Haggai.

The appearance of the city was totally changed. The women gave up their rich ornaments, dressed with simplicity and walked demurely; licentious young men became, as if by enchantment, modest and religious; instead of Carnival songs, religious hymns were chanted. During the hours of midday rest tradesmen were seen seated in their shops reading the Bible or some work of the friar; habits of prayer were resumed, the churches were well-attended, and alms were freely given. But the most wonderful thing of all was to find bankers and merchants refunding, from scruples of conscience, sums of money, amounting sometimes to thousands of florins,

which they had unrighteously acquired.* All men were struck with astonishment at a change so strange, so miraculous; and if Savonarola was exhausted by fatigue, broken down, and suffering from sickness, we can easily imagine how great must have been his consolation to see his people thus Christianised. He might have laid down his life in contentment; but his hour had not yet struck; God had a greater destiny in store for him.

As may naturally be supposed, the Arrabbiati found in all these things only subjects of ridicule; and they became more and more exasperated, scoffing at Savonarola and his followers whom they designated *Piagnoni* (mourners), *Stropiccioni* (sycophants), and *Masticapaternostri* (chewers of paternosters). But these same *Piagnoni* were the only persons who vigorously stood up for the rights of the people, who had been the most forward to take up arms voluntarily when dangers were threatened by the French, who were the most liberal in their supplies to the Comuni, and who showed the most active kindness in relieving the necessities of the poorer classes, then suffering much from the dearness of provisions and scarcity of work. They were the most firmly attached to the Republic, because liberty was united in their hearts with religion; and the State might look with most hope in its greatest difficulties to the followers of Savonarola and the *Piagnoni*.

The enthusiasm in favour of St. Mark's and the Friar became more and more general, to the great mortification of the Arrabbiati. Not only the peasantry from the surrounding country, but the gentry from their villas, set out in the night to find places next day to hear his sermons; some had come from as far as Bologna to

* We will not stop to quote Burlamacchi, Pico, Barsanti, Frà Benedetto, and the other biographers; we would rather refer the reader to the historians of that time, to Nardi, to Guicciardini's *Storia Inedita di Firenze*, &c., and to the above-named correspondence of the Dieci with the Court of Rome, as published by Padre Marchese.

remain in Florence during the whole of Lent,* and the Duomo itself was not large enough to contain the crowd. Several convents made application to be again united to the Tuscan Congregation, and the number of those who became friars of St. Mark's increased to an incredible extent. The 50 that it first contained became 238, so that it was necessary to apply to the Government for the contiguous building of the Sapienza, to be connected with the convent by an underground passage beneath the street now called the *Via del Maglio*. Youths of the first families in Florence were among the new friars; such as six brothers of the Strozzi family, some of the Gondi, Salviati, and Acciaiuoli: there were also men of mature age, distinguished in literature or science and in the conduct of public affairs, such as Pandolfo Rucellai, Giorgio Vespucci the uncle of the celebrated navigator, Zanobi Acciaiuoli, the Jew Blemmet who had been an instructor of Pico della Mirandola, Pietro Paolo Urbino, professor of medicine, and many others.†

The manner in which these conversions to the cloister took place deserves to be particularly noticed, because it will be seen that Savonarola, far from giving encouragement to sudden resolutions and a too ready yielding to enthusiasm, proceeded with the utmost prudence. As an example, we shall describe the account given by himself of a certain Florentine named Bettuccio, but better known by that by which he was afterwards called, Frà Benedetto. He was the son of a goldsmith, and followed the trade, then a very profitable one, of a miniature painter. While a youth, and in the flower of his age, being of a joyous disposition, full of energy and courage, having a good voice and skilled in music and poetry, he led a gay life and

* Burlamacchi, Marchese, &c.

† Padre Marchese, *Storia del Convento di San Marco*.

was wholly given up to pleasures. He was always a welcome guest with his friends, among whom he passed a thoughtless, dissipated life :

Tanto musco e profumo allor portavo,
Con tante pompe e leggiadrie e gale,
Che col cervel senza penne volavo.*

These, he himself says, were the unlucky days; they were those of Pope Alexander VI., marked by avarice, luxury, and infidelity;

Nè quasi si credea dal tetto in su.†

This was the sort of life the miniature painter, Bettuccio, was leading, when the fame of the Friar of St. Mark's began to spread, and when everyone was running to hear him preach. Bettuccio, however, far from following the crowd, attached himself to the Arrabbiati, and joined in their contemptuous abuse of the Piagnoni. But being one day on a visit to a noble and handsome matron, she began to speak to him with great warmth about the sermons of Savonarola, without producing, however, any other effect than to excite his laughter. But on another day he yielded to the gentle persuasions of the lady, and accompanied her to the Duomo. He tells us how great was his confusion on finding himself in such a multitude of devout persons, who appeared not less surprised in looking at him, and his first thought was, to make his escape; but he remained, although in a very discontented mood. But when Savonarola mounted the pulpit, a sudden change came over him. He had no sooner fixed his eyes on the Friar than he found it impossible to withdraw them; his

* (I carry about me so much musk and perfume, such gay ornaments and finery, that in my fancy I fly without wings.)

Frà Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani*, a small poem published by Padre Marchese in the *Archivio Storico*.

† (Nor almost ever casting a thought on things above.)

attention was instantly attracted, and the deepest impression was made upon him; 'and then, he tells us, I felt more dead than alive.' When the sermon was over, he took a solitary walk, 'and, for the first time, my mind was directed to my inmost self.' After a lengthened meditation, he went home a changed man. He threw aside cards, music and musical instruments, avoided his old companions, and cast away his perfumed dresses :

Come un vento
Spogliâmi al tutto d'ogni leggiadria.*

He became, from that day, most assiduous in his attendance on Savonarola's sermons ; he went often to St. Mark's, and repeated the prayers and the litany. He had to maintain a hard struggle, he says, against his former companions, who made a joke of him ; but a still harder struggle with his own passions, which every now and then broke loose, assailing him fiercely. At last, when he thought that he was fully master of himself, he went to St. Mark's, and threw himself on his knees at the feet of the Prior. His voice faltered, he could not bring out a word, in the presence of the man who had brought about his regeneration ; at length he was able to say that he wished to assume the dress of the convent. Savonarola represented to him the danger of hasty decisions, pointed out to him the difficulties of a monastic life, and ended by advising him to subject himself to a stronger trial, by leading a Christian life out of the convent, before venturing to cross its threshold. The advice was far from proving useless, for Bettuccio had again to undergo a fierce struggle with his strong passions, and not always successfully. However, after going through severe penance for his past transgressions, and after he had felt for some length of time that he had acquired a mastery over himself, he

* *Cedrus Libani*. (I cast to the winds every kind of finery.)

returned to Savonarola in a tranquil state of mind. But the Friar, who had never lost sight of him, would not yet consent to his having the conventual dress. Instead of that, he appointed him to be present at the visitations of the sick, and at the burials of the dead :

Così più mesi in un santo ospitale,
A vivi e morti carità facevo.*

Every now and then he called him to his own cell, where he might receive advice and hear lectures on the monastic life; and finally, on the 7th of November, 1495, he put on the dress, and on the 13th of December following, he pronounced the solemn vows, and took the name of Frà Benedetto.†

In this way Savonarola met with one of his most faithful followers, one of those who gave the strongest proof of his attachment to him in the hour of danger, and whose admiration and almost devotion went on increasing to the very last. Savonarola gave similar prudent advice to all others, and never showed any anxiety to induce them to become monks. His sole object was to improve their habits of life, to promote the cause of morality, to regenerate the religion of Christ, which seemed to him to have become dead in men's minds. To this end he now especially devoted every hour of his life, all his powers, his whole heart and soul. When he preached on moral habits and Christian virtues, it seemed as if his whole soul was reflected in his eyes, that the influence of his benevolent spirit was poured forth by his voice upon the people, who most visibly made daily progress under it. All

* *Cedrus Libani* (I thus passed many months in a holy hospital, performing works of charity to the living and the dead.)

† We have taken the whole of this story from Frà Benedetto's own work, the *Cedrus Libani*. Those who wish to know more particulars regarding his life, will find what Padre Marchese says of it in his *Scritti Vari*.

the contemporary writers are unceasing in their expressions of wonder at this apparent miracle. Some were much edified by the triumph that religion had gained; while others lamented the bygone days of gay balls and carnival songs; but all equally bear testimony to the change of manners and to the sole author of that change, the Frate Girolamo Savonarola.

APPENDIX A.

DOCUMENT I.

VOL. I. Pages 14, 17, 18, 19.

*Letter of Savonarola to his Father; restored to its true reading.**

JESU CHRISTO.

My honoured Father,—I do not doubt that you must be mourning over my having left you; and the more so that I went away without any previous notice. I am anxious that I may be able, by this letter, to make you understand the state of my mind and what it is I desire, that you may take comfort from that explanation, and feel assured that I have not acted from a puerile impulse, as some seem to think. In the first place, I would ask you, whom I know to be a man of firm mind, that you would not be influenced by the perishable things of this world, and would be guided by truth, and not by passion as women are apt to be; that you would judge by reason alone, whether I have done rightly in flying from the world, and taking the course I have chosen.

The motives by which I have been led to enter into a religious life are these: the great misery of the world; the iniquities of men; the rapes, adulteries, robberies; their pride, idolatry, and fearful blasphemies; so that things have come to such a pass, that no one can be found acting righteously. Many times a-day have I repeated with tears, the verse,—

Heu! fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum;

Alas! fly from this cruel land, fly from this greedy shore.

I could not endure the enormous wickedness of the blinded people of Italy; and the more so, because I saw everywhere

* This letter has been often published, but always incorrectly. Count Carlo Capponi found the autograph of it in the possession of the Gondi family in Florence, and has published it in his small volume entitled, *Alcune lettere di Frà Girolamo Savonarola*. But as only eighty copies were printed, we have thought it advisable to republish the letter, and we now give it exactly, without any alterations; that we may show the orthography of Savonarola at that early age.—[This last object could not, of course, be fulfilled in the translation.—TR.]

virtue despised and vice honoured. A greater sorrow I could not have in this world, and I was thus led to utter a hasty prayer to Jesus Christ, that he would take me out of this sink of infamy. I had this short prayer continually on my lips, devoutly beseeching God, *Notam fac mihi viam in qua ambulem, quia ad te levavi animam meam.** And since it has pleased God, out of his infinite mercy, to show me that way, had I refused to enter upon it, I should have been unworthy of so great a measure of grace. Tell me then, is it not a great virtue that a man should shun the filthiness and iniquities of this wretched world, to live like a rational being, and not as a beast among hogs? Would it not also have been an evidence of great ingratitude in me, to have prayed to God to show me the right path in which I should walk, and when he had condescended to direct me to it, that I should not have entered it? O Jesus my Saviour! may I suffer a thousand deaths rather than be guilty of such ingratitude to thee. Yes indeed, my most dear Father, you have cause to give thanks to Jesus that He has given you such a son, that He has so preserved him to the twenty-second year of his age, and not only that, but that He has designed to make him militant in his service. Do you not think that it is a very high mark of favour to have a son a soldier in the army of Jesus Christ?

But, to speak briefly, either it is true that you love me, or that I know you would not tell me that you do not love me. If then you love me, seeing that I am composed of two parts, of soul and body, say which of them you love most, the soul or the body: you cannot say the body, for that would be a proof that you do not love me. If then you love my soul most, why not look to the good of that soul? Most assuredly you ought to rejoice and be exceeding joyful over such a triumph. I know, however, that it is difficult for the flesh not to suffer some amount of pain, but that must be subdued by reason, especially by one so wise and high-minded as I know you to be. Think not that it was not a severe pang to me to sever myself from you. Believe me, that never since I was born did I suffer so great mental anguish, when I felt that I was about to leave my own flesh and blood, that I was going among people who were strangers to me, and so offering up a sacrifice of my body to Jesus Christ, by placing myself in the hands of those who knew me not. But then, reflecting that it was God

* 'Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee?'—*Psalm cxliiii.* 8.—TR.

who called me, that He did not disdain to make me, a poor worm, one of his servants, I could not dare to do otherwise than obey so sweet so holy a voice that said to me, *Venite ad me homines qui laboratis et onerati estis et ego reficiam vos : tollite jugum meum super vos, &c.**

I know that your grief was made more severe by my secret departure ; that I seemed to fly from you ; but be assured that so great was my own pain and misery, in parting from you, that if I had laid open my breast to you, I verily believe that the very idea that I was going to leave you would have broken my heart, and that I must have abandoned my intention. You cannot therefore be surprised that I did not tell you. It is, however, true that I left a paper upon the books in the window, in which I gave you notice of what I was about to do. I beseech you therefore, my dear Father, to cease to grieve, and that you will not add to the sorrow and pain I am now enduring ; not on account of what I have done, which most assuredly I have no wish to retrace, even were I certain that by so doing I should become greater than Cæsar. But I am, like you, made of flesh and blood, and feelings so resist reason, that I have a severe battle to fight to prevent the devil from leaping upon my shoulders, and especially when I think of you. The days while the wounds are fresh will soon pass away, and then I hope that both you and I will be more consoled in this world by the grace of God, in the next by glory. Nothing more remains for me to say, than to beseech you, as a man of strong mind, to comfort my mother, and I pray that you and she will give me your blessing. I shall ever pray fervently for the good of your souls. From Bologna, the 25th of April, 1475.

I recommend to your care all my brothers and sisters, but especially Albert, and that you will look after his studies ; for it would be a great error, and even a sin, were you to allow him to waste his time.

HIERONYMUS SAVONAROLA,
Your Son.

(The Address)

Nobili et egregio viro,
NICOLÆ SAVONAROLÆ, parenti optimo,
Ferrariæ.

* * 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'—*Gospel of St. Matthew*, xi. 28—30.—TR.

The above letter was in a packet marked, probably in the handwriting of Signor Gondi:—‘Copy of a memorandum of Niccolo Savonarola, of Ferrara, the father of R. P. Fra Hieronymus, born the 21st of September, 1452. Sent by Marcus Savonarola, of Ferrara, accompanied by a letter dated the 1st of November, 1604 :

“*Memorandum by Savonarola’s Father.*

“I remember how on the 21st day of September, 1452, my Lena presented me with a boy at the hour of 23½: it was a Thursday, the feast of the Apostle and Evangelist St. Matthew. He was baptised and held up at the font by Signor Francesco Libanori, the Secretary of our illustrious Highness, and received the names of Girolamo, Maria, Francesco, and Matteo.

“He joined the Dominican Friars at Bologna on the 23rd of April, 1475, and assumed their dress.”’

APPENDIX B.

DOCUMENT III.

VOL. I. Page 21.

*Letter of Savonarola to his parents.**

Why weep ye, why shed so many tears, ye blind? Why so much murmuring, O people without light? If our temporal prince had asked me to gird on a sword to my side among his people, to make me one of his worthy knights, how great would have been your joy, what a banquet you would have laid out! And if I had rejected the offer, would you not have set me down as a fool? O foolish, O blind people; without a ray of faith. The Prince of princes, He who is infinite in power, calls on me with a loud voice, or rather prays me (O the greatness of His love!) with much weeping, to gird a sword on my side, one of the purest gold, and set with precious stones, to place me in the ranks of his knights militant; and now because I have not rejected that great honour, unworthy though I be (and who could have rejected it?) but rather have accepted it with thanks to so mighty a Lord, as such is His will, ye are offended with me, and show neither joy nor any celebration of

* It is without date. We found it in the Riccardian Library, Cod. 2053.

it by a banquet, but are embittered against me. What then can I say of you when you show yourselves sorrowful on such an occasion but that you are my greatest enemies, or rather the enemies of virtue. When things are so, I can only say to you, [Depart from me all ye who work iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping; the Lord hath listened to my supplication, hath accepted my prayer. May all my enemies be ashamed and grievously confounded; may they be quickly converted and put to shame. Glory be to the Father, &c., who converts sinners, and has made of them soldiers in his army. Amen. Moreover, as the soul is more precious than the body, rejoice and be exceeding glad that the glorious Lord has made me a physician of souls, while I thought of becoming a physician of bodies.]*

APPENDIX C.**

VOL. I. Pages 32 and 84.

To Helen Buonaccorsi, his mother.

JESUS MARIA.

Honoured Mother,—The peace of Christ be with you. I know that you must be surprised that I have not written to you for so many days; but that has not arisen from my not having thought of you, but from the want of a messenger; for I could not meet with any-one going, about this time, from Brescia to Ferrara, except one of our own people, who arrived here after the feast of the Nativity, with which I was so much engaged that I quite forgot to write; which I very much regretted. Since then, Fra Iacomo of Pavia, he who was prior of the Convent of the Angels† before he held his present

* The concluding part, within brackets, is in Latin.—Tr.

** The letters of Savonarola, in this Appendix, which are marked with two asterisks, are not given by Professor Villari. They were published by Padre Vincenzo Marchese in the eighth volume of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, a collection of works and documents either not before published, or which had become very scarce, relating to the history of Italy. The first volume is dated 1842, and forty-five have already appeared. Want of space prevented Professor Villari from including them, and as I give a selection only of the documents in his second volume, he thought it desirable that I should add some of those given by Marchese.—Tr.

† A Dominican Convent in Ferrara, no longer existing.—Tr.

similar office, has visited me, and has told me how much you were distressed by my not having written; I told him that I had not been able to find a messenger, that this place is out of the direct road between Brescia and Ferrara, so that I could not meet with any-one whom I could trust. He told me that when I arrived at Pavia on my way to Genoa, I should find a messenger any day, and that I might write from thence. Having been ordered to go to Genoa, to preach there during Lent, and having arrived at Pavia, I now write, as I had determined to do, to assure you that I am in good health, contented in mind, and sound in body, although tired by the journey; and I have still a long way before me ere I reach Genoa. I do not know that I have anything else to tell you, except this, that so far as I recollect, I have had no letter from you since I last saw you, nor have I heard any thing of what has been going on with you, unless it is what the aforesaid Fra Iacomo has told me.

I can well imagine that you have been in much tribulation, and so far as my frailty will enable me, I pray to God continually in your behalf. I know not what more I can do: if I could in any other way help you, I would do so: but I have voluntarily given myself up to be a slave for the love of Jesus, who for the love of me made himself man, and took the part of a slave to make me free. I therefore in all things seek the glory of the liberty of the sons of God, and do as much as in me lies to serve Him; and I decline no labour for the sake of any earthly or carnal indulgences, but from my love for Him am labouring in His vineyard in divers cities; and that not solely for the salvation of my own soul, but for the souls of others. I have great fear of His condemnation were I to act otherwise; He has given me a talent, and I am bound to make use of it in the way most pleasing to Him. Be not therefore displeased, my most dear mother, if I go far away from you, and if I go about preaching in various cities, as I do it for the salvation of many souls, preaching, exhorting, confessing, reading, and giving council. I do not go from place to place for any other object, and am moreover sent by my superiors to perform that work. You ought therefore to take comfort that God has condescended to elect one of your offspring to be placed in so high an employment.

If I were to remain constantly in Ferrara, be assured that I should not do so much good as I do by being away from it; for no monks, or at least very few, gather the fruit of a holy life in their own country; and we are enjoined by the holy

Scriptures to go from our own homes ; for no one finds so much trust reposed in him in his own country, as a stranger does, either in his sermons or in his counsels. Our Saviour has told us that no one is accepted as a prophet in his own country ; and even He was not accepted in His native land. If then it has pleased God, unmindful of my sins, to elect me to so high a calling, for which I cannot be too grateful ; be you contented that I am working in Christ's vineyard, away from my country, where I find, by ample experience, that I benefit my own soul, as well as that of others incomparably more than I could have done at Ferrara. If I had remained there, and had tried to do that which I do in other cities, I know that the same thing would have been said to me as was said to Christ by his own countrymen, who, when he was preaching to them, said ' Is not this man a carpenter, and the son of a carpenter, and the son of Mary ? ' and they would not listen to Him. So it would have been to me—Is not this Jerome, the man who has been guilty of such and such sins, and is like one of ourselves ; we know well who he is. And so they would have paid no regard to my words. Many a time it has been said to me in Ferrara, by some of those who saw me going about from city to city thus employed, that our friars must have stood much in need of assistants ; as much as to say—' If they employ thee on such an important work, who are so mean a person, most certainly they must stand in need of assistants.' But away from my country, such things have never been said to me ; on the contrary, when I am about to leave a place, both men and women lament ; and they value highly what I have told them. I do not write this for the praise of men, for I take no pleasure in praise, but solely to show you what my object is in absenting myself from my own country ; and that you may know that I do so voluntarily, conscious that I do what is pleasing to God, and healthful for my own soul and those of my neighbours ; and this is more valuable to me than all worldly treasures, which, in comparison with what I profess, are as dust.

Therefore, my most honoured mother, grieve not on my account, for the more I do that which is pleasing to God, so much more will my prayers for you prevail. Think not that you have been forsaken by Him, by reason of your tribulations, but rather think that it is you who have forsaken Him, not He you ; for by scourges will you be brought back to Him : nay, it is probable that by this means He will save you and yours, and will so listen to my prayers : for in them I do not ask Him to give you worldly things, but His grace,

and that He may lead you to the life eternal in such way as is most pleasing to Him.

I thought to write a few lines to you, but my love has made my pen run on, and I have laid open more of my heart to you than I had any thought of doing. Know then, finally, that my heart is more fixed than it ever was to devote soul and body, and all the knowledge which God has given me, for the love of God and the salvation of my neighbours; and as I cannot do this in my own country, I will do it elsewhere. I pray you, therefore, to throw no obstacle in my way, resting assured that if I ever can help you in anything, I will do it; and, if necessary, will not consider it any hardship to go to Ferrara; but when that is not necessary, I shall consider it a great sin to leave, for a trifling cause, the work of God which He has committed to me. Let me recommend you to bear all with patience, and to comfort my sisters, who ought to know that God has done more for them than they think, and that if He had dealt otherwise with them, by giving them worldly goods and honours and husbands, they might have fallen into many and serious sins, of which they are now innocent, and would have been given up more to the things of this world than they now are. I would that they would open their eyes, and see the grace which God has given them, to which they should surrender themselves with their whole hearts, for He never forsakes those who put their trust in Him. So strengthen my brothers and the whole family that they may lead a life of virtue.

This day, so soon as I have dined, I proceed on my way to Genoa. Pray to God that he may lead me thither in safety, and enable me to bring forth much fruit among that people. Remember me to my uncle, aunt, and cousins of both sexes. May the grace of God be with you, and keep you from all harm, for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Written in Pavia, in haste, on the day of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, 1490.*

Your son,

FRATE HIERONYMO SAVONAROLA.

* That is, the 25th of January, reckoning from Christmas day, and not from the day of the Incarnation, which would in that case have been 1491. Savonarola wrote this letter in Lombardy, where they computed the year from Christmas. The dates of his other letters are reckoned from the day of the Incarnation, because they were written in Florence.

APPENDIX D.

BY THE TRANSLATOR.

Vol. I. Page 136.

Testimony of Guicciardini to the Character of Savonarola.

‘ Thus was Frà Jeronimo Savonarola disgracefully put to death ; of whose rare virtues it will not be out of place, here, to speak at some length. For neither in our own age, nor in those of our fathers and grandfathers, has any ecclesiastic been known to be so richly endowed with virtues, on whom so great reliance could be placed, or who enjoyed a greater degree of authority. Even his opponents admit him to have been a man of vast learning in numerous branches, but especially in philosophy ; in which he was so thoroughly conversant that he applied it in all things to which his attention was directed, as if he himself had been its founder. This was especially the case in respect of the Holy Scriptures ; and, in the knowledge of which it is a general belief that there had not existed, for ages, any one at all his equal. He evinced a profound judgement not only in literature, but in the ordinary affairs of life ; how much this was the case is abundantly apparent, in my opinion, in the substance of his sermons. In these he far excelled all his contemporaries ; and they were delivered with an eloquence neither forced nor artificial, but one both easy and natural. The confidence he inspired, and the authority he enjoyed, was marvellous ; he preached for several consecutive years during Lent, and on festival days, in a city abounding in men of acute and fastidious minds, and where other preachers, although of high reputation, never were listened to for more than two or three seasons on such occasions. So great was his celebrity in this matter, that even his adversaries agreed with his admirers and followers.

‘ But the question on which there is a difference of opinion regards the excellence of his private life ; but on this head, it may be said, that if he could be charged with any fault, it was an assumption, as if caused by pride and ambition ; for whoever made a minute scrutiny of his life and manners, never discovered the least trace of avarice, of indulgences, of irregular desires, or of any weakness of character ; but on the contrary, the clearest proofs of a most religious life, abounding in charity, earnestness in prayer, and a careful observance, not

of the external ceremonies only, but of the spirit of divine worship; and in the examinations to which he was subjected, although his calumniators sought eagerly for them, they were unable to discover in him the least trace of blame. The improvements he effected in the morals of the city were most holy and admirable; and at no former period were morality and religion so generally prevalent as in his time; after his death they so much degenerated, as to prove that they had not only been established but were sustained by his influence.

‘Such was the effect of his public preaching, that many became members of his Order; persons of all ages and ranks; youths belonging to the first families in the city, and some advanced in life, who were held in high estimation; such as Pandolfo Rucellai, who had been one of the Dieci and ambassador to Charles VIII.; Giorgio Antonio Vespucci and Signor Malatesta, both canons of the Cathedral, learned and grave men; Pietro Paolo da Urbino, a physician of great eminence and high character; Zanobi Acciaiuoli, a man of great learning in Greek and Latin literature; besides many more of like distinction; so that there was not in all Italy any Convent that could compare with his; in which he directed the studies of youths, not only in Latin but in Greek and Hebrew, who were to become the future ornaments of religion. Nor were his exertions limited to spiritual things, but extended to whatever could benefit the state and the city.’

Francesco Guicciardini, *Opere Inedite*, Firenze, 1859, iii. 178.

APPENDIX E.

DOCUMENT IX.

Vol. I. Page 148.

*Letter of Savonarola to Stefano da Codiponte.**

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep thy heart in Christ, my very dear brother. Being much

* We found this affectionate letter in the Riccardian library, cod. 7, c. 53. Count Carlo Capponi, after we had discovered it, published it along

occupied, I could not comply with your wish; for sometimes forgetful of my own affairs, I am not able to fulfil all I think of and desire. I am urged, however, by reason of your love and exceeding fervour, to beg of you to keep to that vocation to which you have been called. In heaven, all are good; in hell, all are wicked; but in this world both good men and bad men exist, and you would never find in it good men without some bad. Many thus desirous to lead a virtuous life, and unwilling to acquiesce in all that their seniors do, often seek for impossibilities in this world; they wish to live with saints, and exclude all bad and imperfect men, and not finding this, they leave their proper vocation and wander about. They are deceived by the devil; they fall into sin, stumble, and never afterwards return to the wisdom of truth. My son, to live rightly you must act rightly, and submit to ills, and persevere in this unto the death. Who would live wickedly among saints but a perverse man, wholly destitute of the grace of God? It is not a matter of much praise for a man to lead a virtuous life among the good. These things I say to you, not because those with whom you live are bad; they are in truth good, although there may be some among them who are not perfect; but you make a beam out of a reed. Bad men are to be shunned, the perverse are to be shunned, and you ought to dwell with the good; for with the holy you will be holy, with the elect you will be elected, and with the perverse you would be perverted.* But if you expect to escape from evil, it will be necessary for you to quit the world. But were you to leave the world, you may think that you would enter at once into paradise. You would enter the portico of paradise, but not paradise itself. In the world, indeed, you have lived among scorpions. In the cloister you ought to be among the perfect, professing, but

with other letters in the same codex, in his valuable work, *Alcune Lettere*, &c. But as only eighty copies of it were printed, we have thought it desirable to insert it in our Appendix, as it was quite unknown, and is certainly most worthy of being known.

* Here the MS. has one of those abbreviations which Savonarola was so much in the habit of using, and which it is almost impossible to make out without great experience in his handwriting, and without constant reference to the Bible. We must not omit to mention another letter of his, dated May 18, 1495, which has been recently discovered in the Archives of Lucca, and since published in the *Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani*. The subject of it is, an opinion he gave to the republic of Lucca, who had asked him if they could admit Jew money-lenders. Savonarola says, that Jews ought not to be expelled from Christian cities, but that as usury is prohibited, leave ought not to be granted to them to practise it.

imperfectly fulfilling, a virtuous life, and not among bad men : but be not surprised should one false brother be found, rather wonder if such an one should not be found. In the house of Abraham, in the house of Isaac, in the house of Jacob, in the house of Moses, in the house of David, in the house of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all the Apostles and Saints, impious and perverse men were found, persecutors of the righteous : how then can you expect to find any house in this world without some who are bad ? You err, you err, my brother. The temptation is great, and has been contrived through the ministration of the devil : therefore, search for peace and keep to it. Walk in the sight of God, and humbly under the mighty hand of God ; bind up roses with the thorns ; all will seem better to you. If you meet with anything displeasing to you, consider that it has been sent for a good purpose : many are better inwardly than from their exterior you might be led to expect. Be tranquil, therefore, my brother, be tranquil : study humility, submission, obedience : pray continually, and know that where the Lord is there is peace. Pray for me, and commend me to thy superior and the disciples. Farewell.

From Florence, the 22nd of May, 1492.

Brother Hieronymus, of Ferrara, of the order of Preachers,
to his most beloved in Christ Jesus, the novice Stephen
Codiponte.

Pisa—in the Convent of St. Catherine.

EXPLANATORY INDEX

OF

ITALIAN TERMS NOT TRANSLATED.

ACCOPPIATORI, a magistracy of twenty citizens, appointed by a parlamento in December, 1494. Book II. ch. iv. p. 234.

AGGRAVEZZATI, citizens liable to taxation. Book II. ch. v. p. 259.

AMMONITI, persons who, by a decree of the magistracy, were deprived of the rights of citizenship, either for life or for a limited period, on account of some political crime or for not paying taxes.

ANNO, the Florentines began the year, on the festival of the Incarnation, the 25th of March, from a very early period until 1750, when the Grand Duke Francis I. ordered it to be reckoned from the 1st of January.

ARCHIVIO DELLE RIFORMAGIONI; when new laws were passed, or old ones amended, the acts were called Riformagioni, and were kept with the public archives—now called Archivio di Stato.

ARCHIVIO STORICO, historical archives. See Appendix C**, p. 347.

ARRABBIATI, a political party, so called from their *rabid* violence. Book II. ch. vii. p. 319.

ARROTI, citizens summoned occasionally by the Signory, to assist with their advice—assessors. Book II. ch. v. p. 257.

ARTI, Guilds or Corporations. They consisted of twenty-one Collegi, seven of the Greater Arts, and fourteen of the Lesser Arts. In the Greater were included doctors of laws, judges, notaries, bankers, physicians, apothecaries, manufacturers of wool, manufacturers of silk, furriers; in the Lesser were included, butchers, bakers, shoemakers, smiths, masons, carpenters, armourers, harness-makers, linen-drapers, key-makers, &c. Each Collegio had its hall, where the members assembled, appointed their own officers, and acted as judges in causes arising in their own Collegio. By the constitution established in 1282,

no family could enjoy the right of citizenship, which was not inscribed and matriculated in one of the twenty-one arts. Hence the patrician families called *Grandi*, who would not condescend to be enrolled among the arts, and make themselves considered as belonging to the people, such for instance as the Donati, the Bonaparte, the Uguccioni, were not eligible to any office in the Republic. But, in process of time, when the patricians became desirous of enjoying those advantages, they got themselves enrolled in a Collegio, but leaving their dependents to exercise the art; thus the Benintendi were enrolled in the wax-chandlers' Collegio; the Ricci, the Medici, the Peruzzi, the Strozzi, in that of the money-changers; the Martelli in that of the woollen-manufacturers; and so also other members of the most noble families, who subsequently acquired wealth and power in the Republic.

BALÍA, a term signifying power or authority. When extraordinary power was formally conferred on any magistracy, it was said to have received Balía. Book II. ch. iv. p. 233.

BARGELLO, explained Book II. ch. ii. p. 208.

BARILE of wine = 20 fiaschi = 12.05 English gallons. Barile of oil = 16 fiaschi = 8.83 English gallons.

BENEFIZIATI, citizens enjoying the benefit of certain privileges. Book II. ch. v. p. 259.

BIANCHI, } Names of political parties, explained Book II. ch. vii. p. 317.
BIGI, }

BIGALLO, a very ancient hospital for the reception of children abandoned by their parents, and orphans: it still exists.

BORSA, a purse or bag, to collect the written votes at elections.

BORSÆ a mano, }
BORSÆ a sorte, } different modes of collecting the votes; explained
BORSÆ serrate, } Book II. ch. iv. p. 235, and ch. v. p. 280.
BORSÆ aperte, }
BORSELLINO, }

BRACCIO, equal to 23 English inches.

BUONI UOMINI DI SAN MARTINO, a charity, first established by Saint Antonino in 1444, for the relief of persons ashamed to beg; and subsisting at the present time, under the same management, of twelve '*Benevolent Men.*' Book I. ch. viii. p. 126.

CAPITANO DEL POPOLO, a judge appointed in 1250 conjointly with the Podestà, and was, like him, a civil and criminal judge, with this difference, that he sat on cases of the people, while the Podestà sat on those of the richer or aristocratic classes. His office, however, was subject to many changes.

COLLEGIO; the Collegi were a council composed of twenty-four citizens, namely, the twelve Gonfalonieri of the Companies, and the twelve

; Buoni Uomini, whom the Signory were bound to consult on all important affairs of State. Book II. ch. iv. p. 235.

CONSIGLIO MAGGIORE, } the Great General Council of the people, established by Savonarola. Book II. ch. iv. p. 251,
CONSIGLIO GRANDE, } and ch. v. p. 259.

CONSIGLIO DEGLI OTTANTA, a council of eighty citizens of high repute, generally called the OTTANTA (eighty), established in 1494, after the expulsion of the Medici; chosen every six months, from among the members of the Consiglio Maggiore, forming a kind of Senate. Ambassadors were generally chosen from this Council. Book II. ch. v. p. 261.

CONSERVATORI DELLE LEGGI, a magistracy, consisting of ten citizens, whose chief duty was to take care that all the magistrates acted in accordance with the laws; to see that they were not infringed, and with power to annul and to correct all decisions that were in any respect erroneous or contrary to law.

CONSOLI; in 1295 it was ordered that each of the seven Greater Arts should elect a Console and Capitano, as their respective chiefs.

DECIMA, a ten per cent. property tax, passed on the recommendation of Savonarola in 1495. Book II. ch. v. p. 265.

DIECI DI LIBERTÀ DI GUERRA, OR DI PACE. A Council of TEN (*dieci*) citizens, which, when instituted, had a very uncontrolled power. In the reforms introduced by Savonarola this despotic authority was suppressed. The term *di Guerra*, or *di Pace*, was added according as the Republic was at war or in peace. Book II. ch. iv. p. 235.

DUOMO, the cathedral, called also the church of SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE, and sometimes Reparata: the latter denomination being derived from the name of an old church on the site of which it was built.

EXCOMMUNICATIO *latæ sententiæ*, vol. ii, p. 105, is a technical legal term, thus explained in Ferrari's *Bibliotheca Canonica*: "Excommunicatio *latæ sententiæ* est ea quæ ipso facto incurritur, sive criminis perpetratione, sive sententiâ judicis."

FIORINO, florin, }
FIORINO D' ORO, } explained Book III. ch. v. (vol. ii. p. 96).
FIORINO LARGO, }

GONFALONE, a standard or banner.

GONFALONIERE, standard bearer.

GONFALONIERE DI GIUSTIZIA, the chief magistrate, the head of the Signory, first appointed in 1293, and so called from the standard of the people being kept in his chamber, and which he displayed in public when he wished to call the people together for their advice. Book II. ch. iv. p. 235.

IMBORSARE, to put into the *borsa*; a mode of election. Book II. ch. iv. pp. 234, 235.

- MAGISTRATO DELLA MERCATANZIA, a court established to try commercial cases; and from which there was no appeal.
- MARZOCCO, the figure of a lion and shield with the lily—the ensign of the Florentine Republic. Book II. ch. iii. p. 215.
- MERCATANZIA, Tribunale della, a kind of Chamber of Commerce. Book II. ch. v. p. 78.
- MONTE DI PIETÀ, bank for charitable loans. Book II. ch. v. p. 284.
- MONTE DELLE FANCIULLE, charitable bank for young maidens. Vol. II. Book III. ch. iv. p. 76.
- OTTANTA, see CONSIGLIO DEGLI OTTANTA.
- OTTIMATI, *Optimi*, the patrician families.
- OTTO DI BALIA, } A council of eight (*otto*) citizens, whose
OTTO DI GUARDIA E BALIA, } chief duty was to try criminal and political offences, but who had also charge of the internal affairs of the city, and acted as police magistrates; but varying in different epochs of the Republic. Book II. ch. iv. pp. 234–5. ch. v. p. 256.
- PALAZZO, VECCHIO } The Town Hall. It was built for the
PALAZZO DELLA SIGNORIA, } magistracy towards the end of the 13th century, and was then called the Palazzo Publico. When the Grand Duke Cosmo I. removed his residence to the Palazzo Pitti, the Town Hall got the name of *vecchio* (old.) It is now the residence of the Prefect, and contains many public offices. PALAZZO, in this translation, always refers to it.
- PARLAMENTO, an extraordinary assembly of the people in the Piazza della Signoria, called by the tolling of the great bell. Book II. ch. iv. pp. 233, 234, 280.
- PIAGNONI, mourners, a contemptuous party-name applied to the followers of Savonarola. Book II. ch. vii. p. 319.
- PIAZZA, any great square surrounded by buildings; but in this translation it always refers to that in front of the Palazzo Vecchio.
- PODESTÀ, an ancient criminal judge. Book II. ch. v. p. 277. See Capitano del Popolo.
- PRATICA means sometimes a meeting of the Signory, or of the Consiglio degli Ottanta; sometimes minutes of their proceedings; and *Pratiche* is a term applied to reports of debates at such meetings. Book II. ch. v. pp. 257, 261, 270, and Preface, p. xxxii.
- PREGATI, a council in the government of Venice, composed of citizens who were invited (*pregati*), by the Consiglio Grande, to assist with their advice on certain occasions.
- PRELATI, a general designation, not of bishops only, but of other high dignitaries in the church.
- PRIORI, see SIGNORIA.

PROPOSTO, the president or chairman in a meeting of the Signory; often changed at each meeting.

QUARTIERI DELLA CITTÀ. For the affairs of government the city was divided into four quarters, each designated by the principal church within its boundaries. Each *quartiere* was subdivided into four Gonfalonieri.

RIFORMAGIONI, new or amended laws or provisions.

RINGHIERA, a broad stone platform in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, raised some steps above the Piazza. On public occasions, the speakers addressed the people in the Piazza below from this ringhiera.

SEDUTO, a certain result of an election to a magistracy. Book II. ch. v. p. 260.

SEI FAVE, six votes; the votes were taken by ballot, using black and white beans (*fave*): six (*sei*) constituted the majority of votes of the Otto. Book II. ch. v. p. 266.

SIGNORIA—Signory, the chief governing body in the state, that by which the Republic was represented. It had its origin in 1282, when it consisted of eight persons, the Priori delle Arti; and who, in the course of the fourteenth century, were called the Priori di Libertà, two being chosen from each of the four quarters into which the city was then divided. In 1293, a chief was appointed to them, to act as President, who was called the Gonfaloniere di Giustizia (which see). The eight Priori and the Gonfaloniere were changed every two months; and this magistracy continued unchanged until the year 1494. From that date until 1512, and from 1527 to 1530, although it retained great authority, it was deprived of its legislative power, which was transferred to the Consiglio Maggiore. Nor was the executive power left solely in their hands; in the affairs of State and of War, it was shared with the Council of Ten, the DIECI DI LIBERTÀ E PACE; and in the administration of Justice, with the Council of Eight, LI OTTO. This magistracy was annulled by Pope Clement VII. in 1532.

SPECCHIO. Citizens who had not paid their taxes were said to be *scritti a specchio*, and they were excluded from the exercise of any right of citizenship until their arrears were paid.

SQUITTINIO, the scrutiny of votes at elections. Book II. ch. iv. p. 235.

STATUALI, a certain class of the citizens. Book II. ch. v. p. 259.

VEDUTO, a certain result of an election to a magistracy. Book II. ch. v. p. 260.

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